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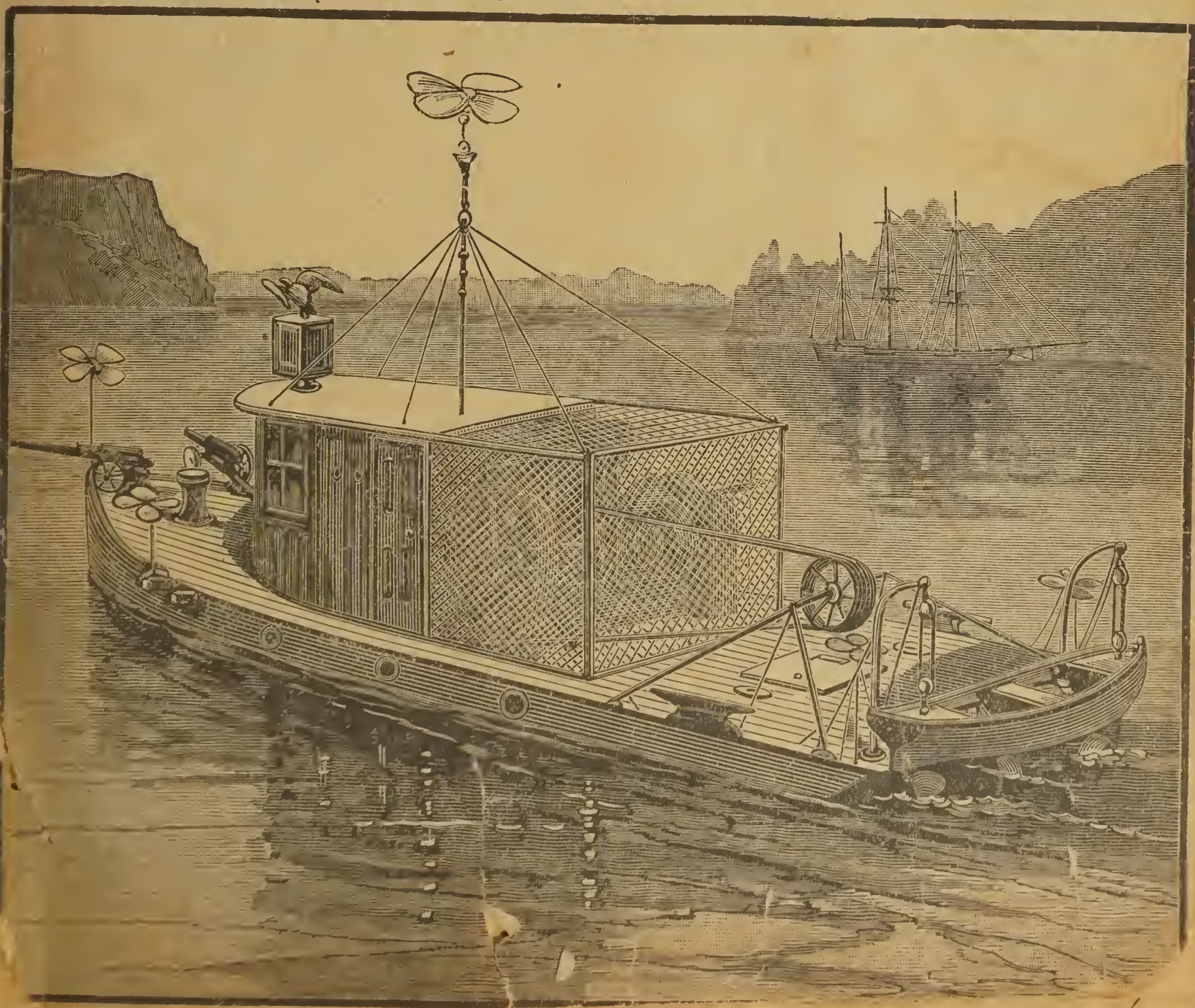
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JACK WRIGHT AND HIS UNDER WATER WRECKING RAFT;

OR,

The Mystery of a Scuttled Ship.

By "NONAME."



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JACK WRIGHT AND HIS UNDER WATER WRECKING RAFT; OR, The Mystery of a Scuttled Ship.

By "NONAME,"

Author of "Jack Wright, the Boy Inventor, and His Electric Tricycle-Boat," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

ATTACKED BY A MOB.

A TERRIBLE storm was raging along the Atlantic seacoast, not a great while ago, the waves rolling high and frothy, the wind shrieking wildly, rain was pouring down in torrents, the murky clouds were torn by vivid flashes of lightning, and thunder was rolling like a thousand batteries of artillery.

The sandy shore was furiously beaten by a heavy surf around the confines of Wrightstown Bay, and over the gloomy waters shone the weird glow of a solitary lighthouse, which stood perched upon a craggy headland, a warning to tempest-tossed mariners on the ocean.

Numberless twinkling lights sparkled in windows of the cottages in the pretty fisher village at the head of the bay, a fleet of fishing-smacks were bobbing up and down on the water, off an old wooden pier, and the streets were almost entirely deserted.

The village had been named after a great inventor, named Wright, who had passed away, leaving an orphaned son, who inherited his wonderful ability, and made himself famous and rich.

Jack Wright now lived in an elegant mansion, with an old sailor, named Tim Topstay, and a fat Dutch boy called Fritz Schneider.

Upon the night in question, the boy inventor was in his library experimenting with a number of electrical instruments for generating power.

He was a dashing, dark-eyed youth, with a stalwart form, clad in a stylish suit, of a candid, honest and fearless nature, and generous to a fault.

Intent upon his work, he did not fail to hear the hurried patter of footsteps out on the side piazza in the yard, and glancing around, he was startled to see the window fly open with a bang, and into the room rushed a man, greatly excited.

He was a tall, thin individual, clad in a dark suit, a long, black coat, a slouched hat, and was drenched with the rain.

The stranger's thin face was half covered by a white, bushy beard, his hair was as black as ink, and his deep-sunken, glittering eyes had a restless, luring look that was painful to see.

"Hello!" exclaimed the startled boy, eying his unexpected caller in amazement. "What the deuce brings you in here that way, sir?"

"Hush!" hissed the stranger, holding up a long, bony finger, and glancing around with a look of nervous dread. "For Heaven's sake do not let any one know I am here."

"Well! That's a peculiar request," said Jack. "What is the matter?"

"You will not marvel at my singular actions when you

know what brought me here," said the man, in hurried, whispering tones.

"Then speak out and explain yourself," impatiently said Jack.

"Are you sure we are quite safe from intrusion here?"

"If it will reassure you, I will lock the hall door," said the boy, doing as he said, and wondering what on earth the man wanted.

"Thank you—thank you!" fervently gasped the stranger, as he peered under the table, behind the curtains, and everywhere else in which he might have suspected any one of hiding. "I am quite relieved. And now to the point: My name is Silas Adams. I am the captain of the ship Blue Bird, of New York, which came into Wrightstown Bay to-day, to ship some of her cargo for San Fernandina, Fla. A terrible crime was committed on board of my ship to-night."

"A crime?" echoed the boy, as Silas Adams paused.

"Ay—a murder!" gasped the other in hoarse tones.

"That is indeed an atrocious act," said Jack, frowningly.

"Worse than all, I am accused of committing it!"

"Did you?"

"Me! Great Heaven, no!"

"Then why are you accused?"

"Circumstantial evidence made me appear guilty."

"Do you know who was the real culprit?"

"Unfortunately I do not. Suffice it that I sprang overboard to escape the fury of my crew and swam ashore. They pursued me, but I managed to elude them on land, and passing here, I ran in to beg protection until I can get further away."

"What were the circumstances connected with the deed?" asked Jack, understanding now why the man was so anxious for secrecy.

"One of my men, named Bob Bowline, got drunk and refused to obey my orders. We had a quarrel, in which I threatened him with dire punishment. Half an hour afterward Bowline was found by his messmates lying in the lee scuppers with a knife belonging to me buried in his bosom. Every one of the crew were great friends of his, and the result was that my quarrel with him and the threats they heard me utter led them to suspect me of the deed."

As Adams ceased talking there sounded a Babel of angry voices and the footsteps of many men at the front of the house, and a moment afterward there came a tremendous ring at the door-bell.

The sea captain gave a violent start and turned as pale as death.

"What the deuce is that?" muttered Jack.

"The voices of my crew. I recognize them," hoarsely said the captain.

"Clamoring for admittance, too," commented the boy.

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"Speak! Will you shield me?" gasped Adams, tremulously.

He grasped Jack's arm with palsied hand, and turning his haggard face upon the boy with a beseeching look, he anxiously waited to hear what his fate might be.

The boy hesitated and keenly eyed the man.

"What assurance of your innocence have I got?" he asked.

"Heavens! If guilty would I come here and tell you my story?"

"It seems improbable that you would have acted as you did if you were culpable," admitted Jack. "Yet I must accept your word against the accusations of a dozen or more."

"Give me the benefit of the doubt," begged the man, bursting into a cold sweat, as the door-bell kept on ringing. "If I fall into the hands of those madmen they will tear me to pieces."

"Remain here until I return," said the boy, unlocking the hall door.

"No, no! Mercy—are you going to let them in?" yelled the man in frantic tones, as he rushed over to the boy and grasped his arm.

"I am going to hear what they say before I decide," replied Jack.

"Remember how appalling the proof is against me——"

"Do not alarm yourself. I am impartial! You shall have justice," replied Jack, and wrenching his arm free he strode out into the hall, and made his way to the front door.

A girl had just opened it.

"Howly floy, it's an army!" she gasped, upon seeing a score of men.

"Is Jack Wright in?" demanded a gruff voice outside.

"That is my name," answered the boy for himself.

He passed the girl and confronted a furious mob of sailors.

The spokesman of the crew was the mate of the Blue Bird.

"We are here to catch a murderer," he shouted at Jack.

"We've been told he was seen to run in here. If you're harborin' him send the rascal out, or it will the worse for you, do you hear?"

"You may reserve your threats," coolly replied the boy, for he saw that they were a rough, unruly gang. "Have you any proof that the man committed a murder?"

"Nothin' but this knife. It is his'n. We found it stickin' in the body of our messmate, Bob Bowline."

"That isn't positive proof of his guilt."

"It's proof enough for us. We'll make short work of him. If we get our paws on him. He can't kill none of us without paying for it."

Jack saw that Silas Adams would perish the moment he fell into the hands of these men, for they were all armed, and were filled with vindictive spite against him.

"Innocent or guilty, he must not fall into their power," he thought; then he added aloud: "I can do nothing for you, sir."

A wild yell arose from the sailors.

"He's pertectin' ther rascal!"

"Down with the lubber!"

"Force yer way in an' collar Adams!"

"To the deuce with what he says!"

These and similar cries arose from the crowd, and they came surging forward, to rush into the house, when Jack cried:

"No, you wont!"

Quickly stepping back into the vestibule, he closed the door with a slam, and bolted it securely just as the crowd reached it.

The massive door fairly cracked from the pressure they brought to bear on it, but it did not give away from the shock.

Jack's action convinced the mob that the boy had the captain in the house, and they gave a yell of rage, uttered a hundred threats and began to pound and kick at the door to break it down.

Once the young inventor determined to protect Adams there was nothing could alter his resolutions in the least.

He strode back to the library, where he found the terrified captain nervously pacing up and down, and said in broken tones:

"They are intent upon killing you, sir."

"Good Lord in heaven! What shall I do?" cried the man in dismay.

"I have made up my mind to protect you from them."

"Oh, I am so grateful—so grateful. You believe in my innocence then?"

"For the time being, I will believe you innocent, until you are proven guilty."

"This is more than I dared to hope for."

"Follow me. I will secure you in my workshop out in the yard beside the creek which flows in from the bay. There you will be safe—here they might get in at you. Come with me, sir."

The boy put on his hat, and opened a side door leading out on the piazza, and they passed out into the rainy, muddy yard.

The light from a window gleamed out upon them, and a voice at the front of the garden suddenly yelled in frantic tones:

"There he goes now, boys! After him—after him!"

Sounds of rushing footsteps coming on in pursuit reached the young inventor's ears, and he then knew that the whole crew were after him, by coming around the side of the house.

"Adams, run for your life!" he exclaimed.

"I will lose you in this gloom," panted the trembling captain.

"Hold on to my hand and follow me," said Jack, coolly.

They ran down the path towards the end of the garden when a pistol shot rang out in back of them, amidst the yell of the sailors ordering them to stop, and then several more shots followed.

Whistling around the two fugitives, the bullets came in close proximity of their bodies, but failed to hit them.

Along ran the boy and the man, the twenty men in hot pursuit, and several more shots pealed out.

This time the captain was hit.

A bullet struck him and caused him to stagger.

"I'm shot!" he gasped, in agonized tones.

"Don't stop!" exclaimed Jack. "They'll catch you if you do."

"But I can't go a step further!" protested Adams, with a groan.

"The door of the shop is only ten steps further."

"Every step is agony to me."

"Recollect your life is at stake."

"Then I'll perish, for I can't move. My nerves are paralyzed."

He sank to the ground with a groan as he spoke, and with a feeling of intense despair, Jack released his hand.

The boy felt in his pocket for a weapon, but had none with which to defend himself or the helpless man.

A wild yell of exultation pealed from the oncoming men, and, with a furious rush, they reached the two.

CHAPTER II.

A PECULIAR VESSEL.

THE triumphant sailors had hardly come to a pause, when the door of Jack's workshop went open with a crash, and out into the yard rushed Tim and Fritz at the head of fifty of the boy inventor's workmen.

Fritz had seen what was happening to Jack, and hastily summoning the rest, they armed themselves with everything upon which they could lay their hands, and then made their appearance.

"*Donner und blitz!*" roared the fat boy, who was of a pugnacious disposition, "looker der ratskals dryin' ter shooed Shack! Go fer dem, fellers, und don't leaf der shkin by deir backs alretty!"

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Jack's men scarcely needed any encouragement, as the old sailor had always been kind to them, and they were devoted to him. With a terrific rush they reached the sailors, and seeing they were outnumbered, the crew of the Blue Bird retreated.

The next moment a scuffle ensued, the men using their fists, and the sailors were driven back step by step. Jack was delighted to get help.

"Tim!" he shouted, to the old sailor. "Come here!" "Ay, ay, my lad—what's the trouble?" questioned Tim. "Stay, as he left the crowd, and came stumping back to Jack.

He had a wooden leg and a glass eye, he wore a sailor's stunnet, his weather-beaten face was framed in a sandy beard, and he had a big quid of tobacco in his mouth. The old sailor had been a messmate of Jack's father in the navy, and he was as brave as a lion, and a good navigator, but he had a habit of lying about his exploits infamously, and consumed a vast amount of plug.

Having accompanied Jack on all his voyages in the different inventions the boy contrived, he was very much devoted to the young inventor.

"I've got a wounded man here," said Jack. "Help me carry him back into the shop—he has fainted." The old sailor readily complied, and Jack examined his injury.

The bullet had passed clean through the captain's thigh and left a painful but not serious wound, which Jack at once dressed, as he had the means at hand.

Adams had merely fainted from the shock. By the time Jack finished dressing the man's wound, Adams revived, and the workmen returned, accompanied by Fritz.

They had driven the sailors away, and left them flying in different directions through the village, and there was but very little prospect of them returning.

Jack then gave all hands the particulars of the trouble, after which the men dispersed to the upper rooms of the building to return to their various occupations.

The Dutch boy and Tim remained with Jack. Fritz was a little older than Jack, his short, fat body was rigged in a suit he wore in the Fatherland, and he had a round, fat face, watery blue eyes, and a mop of flaxen hair.

The young inventor had befriended him when he was poor and homeless, and finding that he was an expert electrician and a good cook, he had always taken him with him on his voyages and divided the profits of his trips with his two friends.

He added to his accomplishments some knowledge of accordion playing, which Tim detested, and owned a parrot named Bismark which he had trained to talk and fight.

This bird, and a red, howling monkey named Whiskers, which Tim owned, had been found in Africa during their first voyage with Jack, and between the bird and beast a hatred had sprung up which often resulted in bloody warfare between them.

As soon as Silas Adams recovered his senses, he found that he could use his leg again, as the effect of the shock had worn away, and he got upon his feet.

"Safe!" he muttered. "Thank Heaven!" "You owe it to my two friends here, Tim and Fritz," said Jack.

"Shiminey Christmas, vot fun ve hat mit 'em!" laughed the fat boy.

"Lor' now, you didn't do nothin'," growled Tim. "Yer'd oughter seen me pitch inter them lubbers. Why, blast my ole timber leg, if I didn't knock forty o' them a-flyin' wi' one swing o' ther club I carried. No sooner wuz they down when I grabs one in each hand by their figger-heads, an' pickin' up a marlin' spike with ther other hand."

"Holy smoke!" gasped Fritz, "dere vos only dwendy in der hull growd, und where dit yer git der udder handt?"

"Why, I—why, I—" began Tim, stammeringly, as he called to mind what a break he made.

"I think you had better not explain, old fellow," laughed Jack, and Fritz broke into such a roar of laughter that he burst several buttons off his jacket, and made Tim swear.

"Were there twenty men all told in the crowd?" asked Adams.

"Oxactly," assented Fritz. "I counted 'em vun by vun." "And so did I," said Jack. "Each one had the name of the Blue Bird in gilt letters on his hat."

"Then every one of the crew except Boh Bowline was on shore," said the captain. "They have left the ship unguarded."

"I suppose they were all so anxious to chase you they did not think of that," said Jack.

"I wish I could get aboard of that craft and examine the body of Bowline," wistfully said Adams. "I might there be able to find some evidence to lead to the identity of the real culprit. Nothing was done in that direction by the crew save to secure the knife with which the crime was committed."

"Jist the idee," said Tim. "An' now's yer time ter do it while none o' ther crew is aboard o' her."

"Ach, how he vos do dot mit der vater so rough, und no vun to helb him?" asked Fritz. "Besides dot, when he on-board ouf der shib vos, maybe some ouf dot crews coor back, und if dey catches him, good-pye Chon."

"What's the matter with us carrying him out to the vessel on my new wrecking raft?" suggested Jack. "We could aid him, and if there is any evidence on board of the ship to vindicate him, between the four of us we ought to find it."

"Fer sure," answered Fritz, with a nod. "I'm ready fer anything," added Tim, giving a hitch to his pants.

"Then come on into the flooded room and we'll get her out," said Jack, opening a door and leading the way into another chamber.

It was an enormous room, brilliantly illuminated by electric lights, with a large flooded basin in the center, where it floated a singular looking craft which the boy recently invented and built.

Around three sides of this room there was a metal foot path, protected by a hand rail, while at the end of the room were great doors opening onto the creek.

Jack's raft had been built with a view to improving the diving-bells and hydrostats in general use for raising wrecks.

It was a vessel very much like a raft, and yet shaped somewhat to resemble a flat boat, as it was pointed at one end. She was about one hundred and fifty feet long, by thirty feet beam, and of about five feet draught on the load water line.

Her free board was about six feet, and her powerful frame consisted of great steel beams, over which a shell of one inch aluminum pipes had been built.

There were two powerful screws and a rudder aft, over which hung a row-boat from a pair of davits.

Along each side and in the bow were horizontal screws, between which were set two stanchions on either side; a trap-door opened in the deck, there were two anchors, a big dead-light, a capstan, two mounted pneumatic guns on the forward deck, and no guards.

From the midship section of the wrecking raft arose a square deck-house, which was divided into three compartments, the front one serving as a pilot-house, and having a window in front, one on each side, and back of them dead-lights and doors.

Aft of this was a finely woven wire cage, inclosing a large, powerful electric machine, from which a belt ran out to an elevated wheel on the after deck, to be used as a windlass.

This machine was entirely insulated by rubber, so that it could be used under water.

The top of the pilot-house was crowned by a strong search-

light and four uprights, upon the apex of which a very large horizontal four-bladed screw was mounted.

Silas Adams took in all these details with a wondering look.

"What a peculiar craft!" he involuntarily exclaimed.

"It is an electric, under-water, wrecking raft," explained Jack, smilingly. "Considering her bulk and the condensed size of her motive power, she travels fairly well, too."

"You don't mean to say you can get any speed out of that thing?"

"Oh, I can force her right along at fifteen knots an hour."

"Can it be possible! She looks staunch enough to stand up well in a sea way, anyhow. Shall we board her by this plank?"

"Go ahead," said Jack, and they crossed over to the deck.

"How did you mean that she was an under-water raft?" asked the captain, pausing upon the broad metal deck.

"Why, I can send her along under water as easily as I can work her upon the surface," replied Jack. "Her hold is divided into three compartments in the midship section where the three bulls'-eyes are on each side. Two are air chambers and one a water compartment. By taking on ballast of water I can overcome the buoyancy of the air enough to sink her to any desired depth, and rise by reversing the operation."

"But you need pumps to do this, and machinery."

"True. I have them. In the bow there is an engine to work the electric machine, a pump for compressing air, and a pump for taking in or letting out water, besides all the machinery for operating the screws. The horizontal screws are put in motion when I have hooked onto a wreck. They hoist the raft to the surface with whatever she has in tow from the bottom. The room under the hatchway aft is a general store-room for diving implements, ship's stores, water, food and so forth, and is reached by a passage running down from the pilot-house floor."

"This boat is a marvel. But let us depart."

"Cast off the mooring lines."

This was done, a workman opened the creek door, and the boy and his companion passed through a door into the pilot-house.

It was a large apartment furnished with a wheel, compass, lever board for operating all the mechanism, gauges, all kinds of necessary instruments, and half a dozen berths.

The room in back, to the right, was a combined kitchen and mess room, and the one to the left was a water chamber, for going in or out of the raft when she was submerged.

They were all furnished with incandescent electric lamps.

Jack pulled one of the levers, putting the screws in motion, and grasping the wheel, he steered the raft out into the creek.

She ran through the storm down to the bay, and turning on the search-light, the boy found the Blue Bird after awhile.

The ship was in the middle of the bay, and not a soul was to be seen upon her decks, yet some of her sails were raised, and she was scudding along like a race horse to the eastward.

There was a large tarpaulin cover over the wheel.

It was impossible for her crew to have returned to her by the time Jack saw her, nor had any one boarded her in the meantime.

Besides the man whom Adams was accused of having murdered not a soul was aboard of her, and yet some of her canvas was spread, her anchors shipped, and she was racing away for the ocean with the gale.

Jack and his friends soon observed this strange mystery.

CHAPTER III.

A MILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF GOLD.

"ADAMS! Here is a strange state of affairs!" exclaimed Jack.

"Do you allude to the Blue Bird running away in that fashion?"

"Yes. I can't see a soul upon her deck."

"Nor can I. Yet somebody must have raised those sails."

"Could the crew have done it before they left the ship?"

"No; for the moment I escaped every one of them pursued me."

"There were twenty men on shore."

"Excluding Bowline, that's all the men I had."

"Was the Blue Bird anchored when you left her?"

"She was. And all the sails were furled."

"It is impossible for any of the crew to have returned so soon."

"To that I could swear."

"But one solution of the mystery remains then."

"Let us hear your theory."

"During the absence of the crew, somebody else may have gone aboard of the ship, raised the sails, let the anchor go, and tied the wheel amidships."

"Why would any one do such a thing as that?" asked Adams.

"I can only conjecture. As it is, the ship is running away, and we must overhaul it if we can, although she is making faster time than we can do. However, since I have set out in pursuit, I won't give up until I run her down."

The Blue Bird was going swiftly out toward the opening in the headland, and Jack sent his boat on in pursuit of her under full speed.

In a few minutes the ship passed out of the bay, and swinging off to the northward, she disappeared behind the lighthouse.

On plunged the Kingfisher, as the raft was named, pounding her bows down upon the water with a bang every few moments, then rising and flying over the waves like a cork.

Ever and anon her stern was flung up from the hissing sea, and the twin screws fairly howled as they buzzed around out of the water.

When she reached the open sea, the Blue Bird was out of sight.

Jack waited until the lightning flashed again and then saw her.

"By Jove! the mystery is deepening!" he exclaimed.

"What's the matter now?" queried Adams.

"Did you see the ship?"

"Of course I did. She's running away from us."

"Heading northward, and beating along with a beam wind."

"Yes, so I observed."

"Before she was running eastward before the wind."

"That's true. But what of it?"

"Why, man, can't you see that her canvas had to be hauled around to make her work on the weather tack? Now how did it get hauled unless somebody was on board to do it?"

"Thunder! That's so!" exclaimed Adams, as the truth dawned upon him.

"In spite of this, I didn't see a soul on her deck," continued Jack.

"Nor did I," said Silas Adams, in perplexity.

The ship was about a league away from the raft, and kept going within about two miles of the coast, her outlines being plainly shown when the lightning tore through the rainy sky.

She had a reefed jib, course, and spanker raised, and the howling gale keeled her over, and buried her in the seas occasionally, but she appeared in sight again every few minutes.

Not another vessel was to be seen on the murky water, and the Kingfisher labored through the heavy seas slowly but steadily.

Mile after mile was thus passed over, the fury of the storm never abating as hour after hour slipped by.

Several times through that never-to-be-forgotten night our friends lost track of the runaway ship, and beat about until either the lightning or their search-light revealed her again.

At times the Blue Bird seemed to run away from them, then they seemed to gain on her, and thus the night wore away.

Day finally broke, gloomy and sullen.

In the distance the southern part of Nova Scotia was discerned, and the ship seeming to have lost her course-spanker, was going along much slower, and with an uncertain motion.

With no guiding hand at her wheel, she frequently ran into the wind, then falling off, jibed her jib, and beat away on different tacks.

These erratic actions gave the Kingfisher a chance to creep up closer to her, until but a mile separated them.

Jack then saw that the missing sails were blown to ribbons.

Had they remained and retained the nice trim at which they had been set, she would have kept her lead on Jack's boat.

The boy glanced at his patent log register.

It marked three hundred miles from the time they set out.

"We will soon overhaul her now, Adams," said the boy.

"Ay, but I'm afraid the waves breaching over her decks have carried away any evidence that may have remained to tell who killed Bob Bowline," replied the captain, dejectedly.

"It is likely," replied Jack. "Still we can capture the ship and bring her back to port, as she may have a valuable cargo."

"Valuable? I should say so. There's over a million dollars in her."

"How do you make that out?" inquired Jack, in surprise.

"I'll tell you," answered Adams. "The ship-owners usually had a consignment of gold bars from a New York banking house. As the banker had been robbed on the rail to Florida, he preferred to ship the gold. The owners of the Blue Bird had the contract to carry the gold. In order not to excite the cupidity of the crew, the matter was kept a secret from them."

"How was that done?"

"Why, the gold was packed in cases of merchandise, and was shipped as merchandise. There are ten cases on board of the Blue Bird now, which are to go to the ship's consignees in San Ferdinandina, and they contain over a million dollars worth of gold, just as I told you. These shipments have been made continuously for several years past successfully, no one but I knowing that the gold was on board, until this trip—"

"Then the secret leaked out this trip, eh?"

"Owing to an accident. While hoisting the last case on board at the dock in New York, the sling broke, and the box fell into the hold and broke open. Its contents were revealed to the man who was down in the hold at the time—"

"Who was this man?"

"Bob Bowline, the murdered sailor."

"Ha! What happened then?"

"Fortunately I was near at the time. I sent every one ashore, and went down in the hold. I found Bowline trying to mend the case. He acknowledged that he knew what the case contained. I then explained the secret shipment to him, and put him under oath to keep the matter to himself. He swore he would not reveal the secret. As I knew he was a man of his word, I trusted him implicitly, and we set sail next morning for Wrightstown to take on some freight ere heading for Florida. You know what happened next."

Jack began to ponder.

Perhaps Bowline had told what he knew to some one, and when the crew left the Blue Bird in Wrightstown Bay, to pursue Adams, there might have been some confederates of Bowline waiting to steal the ship in order to rob her of her cargo.

Might not these imaginary people have gone aboard and prepared the ship to depart, when something happened to scare them off, leaving the vessel to send away at the mercy of the elements, as Jack had seen?

This was a theory the boy formed about the matter.

It was not correct, however.

This will be shown in the sequel.

The Kingfisher had now arrived within less than a mile of the Blue Bird, and Tim suddenly interrupted the boy's thoughts by saying:

"Blow me if ther ship ain't a-runnin' into a fog bank."

"Himmel! Und dere vas Seal Islandt ofer dere to der leeward," said Fritz, pointing at a small projection from the sea.

The rain, thunder and lightning had ceased with the dawn, the wind was hellowing and the waves were running high yet, but a dense sea fog was rolling in from the eastward.

It had begun to envelop the ship.

The Blue Bird suddenly disappeared from view within half a mile of the island.

On rushed the wrecking raft, and she rushed into the fog. Her search-light cut through it like a knife and presently fell upon the ship, but a cable's length ahead.

"She is sinking!" exclaimed Jack.

"Holy gee! she's buried to her scuppers!" the old sailor cried.

While the Kingfisher was dashing toward the vessel, she swiftly settled down lower in the water till her deck was flush with the surface.

There was not a soul upon her.

"Dit she vas shprung a leaks in dot storms, I vunder?" asked Fritz.

"Something must have happened to make her go down so fast," replied Adams, in troubled tones, as he watched her.

The wrecking raft drew nearer to the ship, and all of a sudden the Blue Bird rose up, plunged down and sunk.

Down went her hull, with a gurgling of the water, until it disappeared, the masts quickly following foot by foot, until at last they were swallowed up in the depths and nothing remained to mark the spot where the ship had sunk.

"Gone!" ejaculated Jack. "We had our journey for nothing."

"For Heaven's sake, stop the boat and buoy this spot!" cried Adams.

"Ay, that's a good plan," assented Tim. "The owners may want her raised."

"Und ve vas got yust de ting vot's wanted for a buoy," added Fritz.

Jack brought the raft to a pause.

Fritz hurried out of the pilot-house, and presently was seen going across the deck with a water-tight, white-painted keg in his hands, to which a long, galvanized chain was attached.

On the other end of the chain was a large grapnel.

The Dutch boy dropped the keg into the water, and let down the grapnel, which was marked off in fathoms with strips of red flannel.

It sunk until twenty of these marks had gone down ere the iron touched bottom, and but five fathoms remained.

That was enough to give the keg plenty swing.

Fritz then went back to the pilot-house.

"Dere was dwendy fadoms depth here," he announced.

"Very deep water," commented Jack. "That's 120 feet."

"I cannot imagine what made that ship founder," exclaimed Adams. "She was only five years old and was rated A 1 by the underwriters. Before we started she was thoroughly inspected from bow to stern and keel to truck, and they found her to be as sound in every particular as a ship could be."

"Couldn't she a-fouled a rock?" asked Tim.

"If she did, it must have been near here, or she would have gone down sooner," said Jack; "and as there are no rocks anywhere near here, so far from shore, in this deep water, it is very improbable that such a thing has occurred."

"Dot mysteries don't could been explained until somepody der bottoms ouf dot shibs vos examined," said Fritz.

"Then I shall be the one to solve the puzzle," said Jack, "for I'm going back to New York, and after I tell the ship-owners what has happened, I will offer to raise the vessel for them with this raft. No one but we four know where she went down, and as she contains a treasure worth a million, there can be no doubt but what we will get the contract."

The rest agreed with this, and the Kingfisher was brought about and headed down the coast again, homeward bound.

CHAPTER IV.

THREE MYSTERIOUS MEN.

On the day after the Kingfisher reached Wrightstown and was put back in Jack's workshop, the young inventor and Silas Adams went to New York by rail, to see the ship-owners, Messrs Dale & Dixon.

The first thing they did was to go to police headquarters, where Adams surrendered himself to the authorities, and then told his story about the stabbing of Bob Bowline.

As the crew of the Blue Bird had already reached the metropolis, and made a charge of murder against the captain, the police knew all about it.

The mate was particularly emphatic in his accusations against Adams.

The captain was held for further developments, and assured that he would ultimately be released on bail, Jack left him, and made his way to the office of the ship-owners in Front street.

It was a very handsome place of business, there were half a dozen clerks in the place, and an office boy carried Jack's card into the private office of the firm.

A few minutes afterwards he returned and said:

"Please step this way—Mr. Dale is in and will see you."

He then ushered Jack into the private office.

It was fitted up as such offices usually are, and at a desk sat a stout man, about fifty years of age, attired in a neat black suit, a fringe of gray hair surrounding his shining, bald crown, a short-cut gray mustache on his lip, and his florid, full face beaming with good humor.

He arose cordially and shook hands with Jack, saying heartily:

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Wright. Often heard of you. Got your letter from Wrightstown about the Blue Bird. Be seated, sir."

The boy took a seat, and detailed what happened to the ship.

Mr. Dale listened attentively until he finished, and then said:

"This is a grave affair. Sorry it happened. Great loss to us as the ship was not fully insured. Anxious, in fact, to raise her if we can, irrespective of the underwriters. Hope you will undertake it."

"My motive in calling was to offer my services for that purpose, sir," replied the boy. "I know just where to put my hands on her. Besides, her cargo is too valuable to lose."

"True. We're responsible in a measure for the gold. Under the circumstance of storm were exempt according to conditions of bill-of-lading, however. Yet must treat shippers with every consideration. Held a conference with banker. They're willing to pay salvage. Left the entire matter of recovery in underwriters' hands, of course."

"You wish, then, to have me raise the wreck?"

"Partner and I talked it over after receipt of your letter. Agreed to leave it to you. Will pay regular salvage of 25 per cent. of gross valuation. Big penny, too. Total amount about \$1,200,000. That's \$300,000 for the job, of course. Ah—here's Dixon now."

The door opened, and a tall, thin man entered.

He was a dissipated looking individual, attired in the height of fashion, wore a profusion of diamonds and had a narrow, cadaverous face adorned by a black mustache and side whiskers.

Mr. Dale introduced Jack to him.

A strange look flashed across the man's face when he learned who Jack was and what he wanted.

"There is no need of such haste in the matter, don't you know," he remarked, with never a smile upon his sallow face. "We have not yet arranged with the shippers, the insurance company, the underwriters, or anything else. I

think we had better let the matter rest until these things are placed upon a proper basis."

"As you please," replied Jack, coolly.

He did not fancy Mr. Dixon.

There was such a strong contrast between him and Mr. Dale, and he was so slow, measured and calculating that the boy took a strong dislike to him at once.

The quick, terse, good-natured manner of the stout senior member of the firm was more to the boy's liking.

Moreover, it seemed to Jack that while Mr. Dale was anxious to get the ship up as soon as possible, Mr. Dixon for some mysterious reason was anxious to leave her sunk.

Even Dale noticed this and began to expostulate.

"Longer she's submerged the more her contents will be destroyed," he said. "Better get her up as quick as possible, Dixon. Can't get a chance every day in the week like Wright offers. He's got a wrecking raft on hand that will lift her without injury. Beats all the divers, hydrostats and diving-bells in the country. Besides, he and his friends are the only ones who can locate the ship."

"You are mistaken, Dale," replied Mr. Dixon, curtly.

"Can't be. They were the only ones who know where she is."

"No, they ain't. Don't you believe it."

"Don't see how you make that out, Dixon. When the Blue Bird sank in the fog no one saw her go down but Wright's party."

"I beg your pardon, others saw her sink."

"The deuce you say!"

"Moreover, I know exactly where to put my hands on her."

"Will you tell me, Mr. Dixon," asked Jack, in amazement, "who besides the ones on my raft saw the ship go down?"

"I decline to answer that question, sir," replied Dixon, coldly.

Jack was deeply chagrined.

His detestation of Mr. Dixon increased.

It was evident that this man meant to antagonize him.

What his reason was the boy had not the remotest idea.

"When you have decided what you intend to do," said Jack, rising to his feet, "if you agree to engage me you know where I reside. In the meantime, Mr. Dixon, as you must be aware that the shippers, bankers and insurance people have a larger interest in the raising of that craft as soon as possible than you. I shall lay the matter before them to-day. If I am not engaged to insure your interests I may be for theirs!"

Dixon started, and scowled.

He saw plainly that he had aroused Jack's anger.

For a certain reason of his own, this was detrimental to him.

It were much better for him to conciliate Jack, he thought. The boy opened the door, and put on his hat.

"Wait a moment!" exclaimed the ship-owner, peremptorily.

"I have nothing further to say to you, sir," replied Jack, with dignity.

"You are too hasty, you know. I will engage you later on."

"When I have concluded my negotiations with the owners of the gold in that ship," replied Jack, grimly, "I may talk to you."

"No—no! You need not do that——"

"Good-morning!"

"Stop! I——"

But the door closed, and the boy was gone.

Mr. Dixon rushed out after Jack, but he was too late.

The boy stepped into the cab that awaited him and was driven away ere the ship-owner could utter another syllable.

By the time Jack had finished his business in New York that day, he had a strong assurance that he would be engaged to raise the wreck.

He then returned to Wrightstown and told Tim and Fritz what he did, and they were both as much amazed as the boy

was to learn that Mr. Dixon knew where the Blue Bird sank.

"If he really does know as much as he professes," said Jack, "it is clear enough to me that some one besides ourselves saw the ship go down, and reported the matter to him."

"Lord save yer, lad, wot did Dixon act so queer fer?" asked Tim.

"His reason was very mysterious to me," the boy replied.

"I recollect when I wuz in ther navy," said Tim, giving a hitch at his pants, and taking a big chew of navy plug, "ther ole frigate Wabash wuz a-sailin' off Hampton Roads, when a gunner named Sam Spike got actin' queer like Dixon did, an' no one could see why he done it——"

"Vot vas dot, your plamed lies again?" demanded Fritz.

"No!" growled Tim, glaring at the fat boy with his good eye. "This are gospel. As I wuz a-sayin'—ther enemy wuz aimin' ther last gun at our craft, an' Sam Spike stood right in front o' it. Every one yelled ter him ter move aside, but he wouldn't budge. 'Thar he stood a-watchin' that 'ere gun, when wi' a bang she went off!"

"Killed him, I suppose?" asked Jack, smilingly.

"Gee whiz—no! Along came the bombshell a-howlin', when Sam ups wi' his hands, catches it on ther fly, an' fired it back on ther enemy's ship, whar it busted an' blowed 'em ter pieces!"

"Shiminey Christmas, what a whopper!" groaned Fritz.

"Wot, don't yer believe me?"

"No; how could he do such a thing?"

"Sam used ter be catcher on ther New York baseball nine!"

Jack and Fritz could not refrain from laughing at Tim again, and then went down to supper.

A week passed by, during which time the young inventor was kept in correspondence with the owners of the Blue Bird.

The entire matter of raising the vessel had been turned over by all parties interested into the hands of the underwriters.

This virtually put an end to Mr. Dixon's antagonism.

The underwriters then called on Jack, and having seen what extraordinary facilities the boy had for raising the ship, they gave him the job under contract.

He was to receive 25 per cent. of the gross value of ship and cargo, for raising the Blue Bird, and returning her to New York with her contents intact, save for the damage received from sinking and other accidents.

That settled the matter.

The boy now had nothing to do but to get his wrecking raft in readiness, and set out to accomplish his work.

Success meant a rich reward for him.

He held a conference with his friends again, and after they had mapped out their course of procedure, they began to stock the Kingfisher with everything they needed for the work.

Two days thus passed by ere they had her ready for service.

On the following day they were to set out.

Fatigued by their labor that night, the three retired early.

It was a dark and gloomy night, and the bell in the Town Hall tower chimed the hour of twelve.

As the reverberations went echoing over the sleeping village a row boat containing three men glided up the creek.

The occupants of the boat were making every effort to keep their actions screened from view, and proceeded silently along until the boat reached the doors of Jack's workshop.

Here it paused, and one of the men produced an auger and a saw and cut a large hole through the planks.

When this was done the skiff was silently rowed into the basin.

She stopped beside the Kingfisher, and the man in the bow lifted up a large bombshell, boarded the wrecking raft with it, and silently passing into the pilot-house, he planted the shell on the floor, struck a match and lit the fuse.

The explosion of this bomb there would destroy the Kingfisher.

Having accomplished his design, the man rushed out on

deck and in the gloom tripped over a wire and fell into the water.

The wire started a blinding glare of electric lights flashing out all over the shop, illuminating the place as if by day.

It also set an electric alarm-gong clanging with a frightful noise.

Uttering an imprecation the man swam to the skiff and his two companions lifted him in from the water.

"Go! Go!" he hissed, furiously. "I fell over a burglar alarm!"

"Some one's comin', too!" muttered one of the men in dismay.

They heard the hurried patter of footsteps, and grasping their oars sent the boat flying toward the opening they had cut in the door.

CHAPTER V.

ALMOST DROWNED.

THE skiff had scarcely reached the opening in the doors, when into the shop rushed Jack, Tim and Fritz, armed with pistols and only half dressed.

Catching sight of the three men in the boat, the young inventor cried:

"See! There's the cause of the burglar alarm ringing!"

"Blast 'em, they've stove a hole in ther creek doors," roared Tim.

"Don'd led der son ouf a sea gooks escape!" the Dutch boy yelled.

"Head them off by going out the door to the creek side!"

"Ay, ay, my hearty, and we'll haul 'em too, besides."

"Coom on, Dim, after dem skellywags alretty!"

The sailor and fat boy rushed out.

Jack was about to follow them, when a peculiar hissing noise reached his ears, and brought him to a sudden pause.

The sound came from the direction of the raft.

He glanced at the fine wire which had been broken by one of the men falling over it, and saw at a glance that the prowlers had been aboard of the Kingfisher, when the alarm was started.

"They have been up to some mischief onboard of her. I had better get upon her and find out what is making that noise."

Death stared Jack Wright in the face, and he did not know it.

Should the bomb burst then, it would tear him to fragments.

Ignorant of the extreme peril he was in, the boy leisurely crossed the gang-plank, and reaching the deck, he looked around.

He did not see anything to excite his suspicions.

Then he passed through the side door, and still searching for the cause of the hissing sound, he finally penetrated the pilot-house.

A bright spark on the floor met his glance.

It was the burning fuse in the bombshell, and as soon as Jack saw it, he realized the danger he was exposed to.

Stooping over, he observed that he could not extinguish the fire in time to stop the bomb from bursting, as it was then in the orifice leading into the interior of the bomb.

The bomb would burst in about three or four seconds more.

Jack did not lose his coolness or presence of mind, although not one man in a thousand would, in a similar situation, have had courage enough to face such danger without flinching.

There was but one course for him to follow.

He picked up the bomb in both hands and hurled it with all his might through the glass window.

With a jingling crash the bomb flew through the air, and speeding across the deck, it struck the water in the basin and sunk.

Boom!

It exploded.

A frightful report followed.

Up into the air went a mass of water to the roof.

There came an awful shock against the Kingfisher.

A portion of the burst shell had struck under her bow.

It tore a gaping hole in the metal plates, permitting the water to rush in and rapidly fill up the hull, when it began to sink.

Jack had been hurled to the floor by the shock, and striking his head upon the edge of a chair, he was stunned.

Swiftly the wrecking raft began to sink, and it threatened to carry the gallant boy down and drown him while he was unconscious, when Tim came rushing back, alarmed by the explosion.

The old sailor did not know what happened, but he saw that some catastrophe had occurred to the Kingfisher.

Not seeing anything of Jack, and fearful lest he had been killed or injured by the explosion, the old fellow hobbled out upon the fast sinking raft and glanced around.

The Kingfisher's decks were buried by this time, and he saw the shattered glass in the pilot-house windows, and peering in, observed the recumbent figure of Jack lying on the floor.

"He's a dead lad!" gasped Tim, in dismay.

Flinging open the door, he stumped in just as the raft sunk.

Tim grasped the boy up in his arms.

As he reached the door the raft went down, carrying them with it.

The pool was dredged fifty feet deep, but the raft did not go to the bottom at once, as the mooring hawsers held her up.

The stern line snapped in two, but the bow line held her, and there she hung, the old sailor having been swept back into the boat by the intruding water.

He struggled valiantly to get out again.

Never relaxing his grasp on Jack he fought his way to the door.

Tim never knew how he ever managed to get out of that death-trap with Jack in his arms, but the first thing he knew they were shooting surfaceward and bobbed up out of the water.

"Help, help!" hoarsely cried the old sailor.

His wooden leg was an impediment to swimming well with a burden in his arms, but he struggled manfully to keep up.

"Ach, mein Gott! Who's der medder?" yelled Fritz's voice.

The Dutch boy had just come running back.

"Down here in the water!" roared Tim.

"Catch yourselluf dis ropes!" returned Fritz.

He hastily loosened the remnant of the broken stern hawser from a stanchion on the footpath and tossed an end to Tim.

The Dutch boy made a slip-noose in the end, and when the old sailor caught it he fastened it to Jack, who was reviving.

"Hoist away!" he bawled.

Fritz hoisted Jack up, and Tim swam over to an aluminum staircase, ascended and joined Fritz.

The young inventor had by this time recovered his senses, and just then the remaining hawser holding the raft suspended, parted with a report like a pistol shot and the Kingfisher sank.

Down she went to the bottom like a shot.

"Tim! Fritz! The boat!" gasped Jack, sitting up.

"She has just sunk," replied the sailor.

"Destroyed?"

"No; only a hole stove in her, I reckon."

"Did you discover who did this?"

"Ther raskils rowed acrost ther creek an' escaped in ther woods."

"Oh, pshaw! That's too bad!"

"Couldn't even git a shot at 'em, my lad."

"Why was this dastardly work done?"

"Some un's got a spite agin ye. But wot exploded?"

"A bomb. They placed it inside of the pilot-house."

"Ther deuce! Ter blow up ther Kingfisher?"

"Undoubtedly. It was a mean outrage."

"Who could a-had a interest in gittin' ther boat destroyed?"

"I only know of one person to suspect."

"Who's that, my lad?"

"Mr. Dixon, the ship-owner."

"But I don't see how her loss'd benefit that lubber?"

"Nor I. Yet he seemed, as I told you before, not to be over anxious to have us rescue his ship from the sea. As she was not fully insured, and I can fathom no reason why he could derive any benefit from her remaining there, it seemed absurd for me to suspect that man. Yet I can't help it. He is the only person I know of who has recently given me any cause for suspicion. Consequently my impression that he did it."

The boy then detailed what happened to him.

He was relieved to hear that the boat was not demolished.

It occurred to him ere he was stunned that the bursting bomb had torn her to pieces, causing her to sink.

Tim had seen enough of her to know better than this.

It would be an easy matter to raise and repair her.

Nothing could be done that night, so they set a man to guard the shop and returned to the house.

"This affair will delay our departure some," said Jack, ere they parted for the night, "but we'll go anyhow within a week."

On the following day the police authorities were notified of the outrageous attempt that was made to destroy the raft and a hunt was made for the culprits, but they were not found.

The Kingfisher was raised with a derrick.

It was then found that she had been badly injured.

New frame beams and plates had to be made, new lights of glass set in, and the work of repairing her went on night and day.

In four days the boat was fit for service.

The most strenuous efforts had been put forth to accomplish this, and when she was ready for sea her stores were overhauled, such things as the water destroyed were thrown away and new procured, so that she was thoroughly equipped in one day more.

Everything was done with the utmost secrecy, as Jack did not want his secret enemy to know anything about his movements.

As soon as everything was in readiness the parrot and monkey were carried on board of the raft, secured in two cages.

Our friends then embarked.

The hour of departure was set for two o'clock in the morning.

At that hour every one in the village was apt to be in bed, and as it was a cloudy night, nature favored their project.

Jack drove the raft out into the creek and down the bay without a light burning, and not a human being was seen.

The headland was reached.

But just as the electric raft was about to pass on to the heaving sea, a row-boat containing two men suddenly darted out from the point under the lighthouse.

It shot swiftly across the inlet athwart the course of the raft, and as the Kingfisher was passing it, one of the men cried:

"Yes, it's Jack Wright's wrecking raft!"

"But I thought she was blowed to pieces!"

"You can see for yourself that she isn't."

"True for you, but how was she saved?"

"That's more than I can tell you!"

Jack was startled and exclaimed:

"Say! Did you or Fritz let on to any one about that bomb?"

"Not a word from me," replied Tim.

"Und me neider," added Fritz, vehemently.

"How in thunder did the fellows in that boat know an attempt was made to blow this craft to pieces then?" asked Jack.

"Didn't no one else know about it?" queried Tim.

"Only the police, and they wouldn't give it away."

"Sure enough," assented the Dutch boy; "I tink so neider."

"Then as they know so much about it I feel certain that they are spies, who have been posted here by the one who instigated the bomb affair to watch the rulet and see if we depart."

"Jist the idea!" exclaimed Tim.

"I'll soon find out!" the boy muttered.

"How you do yourselluf dot?" asked Fritz, curiously.

"Why, I'll tackle those fellows, capture them and ask questions."

"Heave away, my hearty, an' we'll stan' by yer!" said Tim.

Jack steered the raft after the row-boat and put on full power.

She rapidly bore down upon the skiff, and despite the men's efforts to row away, ere they had gone fifty yards she hove up to it.

Jack flung open a window.

Taking a revolver from a rack near at hand he aimed it at the two boatmen, and shouted sternly:

"Haul to there!"

"Go to blazes!" was the defiant reply.

"Stop, or I'll fire upon you!"

"Two can play at that game!" retorted one of the rowers.

A pistol suddenly flashed in his hand and he fired at Jack.

The ball whistled past Jack's head and was buried in the wall in back of him.

Angry at the audacious wretch the boy took deliberate aim at him and fired a shot.

CHAPTER VI.

AN EXPOSURE.

THE shot from Jack's pistol wrung a yell of agony from the individual who had fired, he dropped his weapon, and flinging up his hands, he fell prone in the bottom of the skiff.

By that time the boat was close to the shore, and the other man was pulling with all his might to reach land.

In order to frustrate this design, Jack drove the raft straight at the skiff, and turning to Tim and Fritz, he said:

"I've hit the beggar!"

"Sarved him right!" growled Tim.

"Deir actions," remarked Fritz, "shows signs of guilt."

"It's evident they are anxious to keep out of our hands."

"We didn't give 'em no cause ter fear us afore," said Tim.

"That's what makes their actions look suspicious."

"Shiminey! Ve vas almost by der dop ouf dem!"

"Run outside, boys, and when you get a show, haul them on board."

The fat boy and old sailor hastened out, and the raft sped ahead.

Just as the skiff arrived within twenty feet of the shore, the Kingfisher struck her amidships, stove in her side, and knocked both men overboard.

The young inventor immediately stopped his raft.

Loud cries of alarm pealed from the two men, and the one who was uninjured rapidly struck out for shore, intent upon escape.

The wounded man had difficulty in keeping himself afloat, and yelled frantically to his companion to stop and help him.

Filled with alarm, the other kept right on, however.

"Hey!" Tim roared at him. "Luff up thar—d'ye hear?"

"Never!" came the defiant answer, as the man glanced back.

"Shood 'em, Dim—shood em!" roared Fritz, angry over his escape.

"Blast my figger-head, I ain't got no weaping!" growled Tim.

"Help—help!" yelled the wounded man. "Save me! I'm drownin'!"

"Steer fer ther lubber, Jack!" bawled the old sailor.

"All right—stand by to haul him up," responded the young inventor.

The other man reached shoal water and waded rapidly ashore.

When he reached the beach, he tARNED, shook his fist at the trio on the raft, plunged into the bushes and disappeared.

Jack had steered the Kingfisher toward the other.

As she ranged up to him, Tim caught the man with a boat-hook, and assisted by Fritz, he was hoisted upon deck.

Jack's bullet had hit him in the right shoulder.

It rendered his right arm useless, and rendered him vicious, for no sooner had they raised him to the deck, when he hauled off his left fist and gave Tim a punch that knocked him over.

"Gee whiz!" roared the astonished old fellow, as he landed on his back with a bang. "The ugly swab has foundered me!"

The man then attacked Fritz.

But he caught a Tartar, for the Dutch boy had all his pugnacious spirit aroused by the assault on Tim.

"Holy sufferin' Moses!" he gasped, as he doubled up his fists and pitched into the man. "So yer vant to fight, hey? Vell, coom on vonct! I vos retty fer yer. Took dot—und dot!"

He fought with the science of a pugilist, and catching the man upon the nose, he floored him.

By that time Tim had arisen, and attacking the man together, they bound him hand and foot with a piece of marline.

He was a short, stocky fellow, clad in rough garments and a fur cap, and he had an ugly face covered with a week's growth of brown beard and a heavy tanning of the sun.

His eyes and hair were black, he wore a mustache, and had massive, square jaws, a big, red nose and heavy eyebrows.

"Le' me go!" he raved, furiously. "Gimme a show, an' I'll lick ther both of yez, even if me right arm was plugged with a shot."

"Ach, shut yourselluf up!" growled Fritz, "or ve something put in your mouth."

"Help me ter carry ther beast inter ther pilot-house," said Tim.

This was done, and Jack sized the fellow up critically.

"He's a ruffian!" was his comment. "A stranger here, too."

"You wait till I git free!" yelled the man. "I'll fix yer fer shootin' me."

"Why didn't you haul to, then, when I ordered you to do so?"

"You ain't got no right ter order people ter do what you say!"

"I have, under certain circumstances."

"Oh, you'll git paid for this piece of work."

"Stop your threatening; I want to ask you a few questions."

"I won't answer anything you say."

"Are you determined to be obstinate?"

"Yer kin kill me, but yer can't make me speak."

"Oh, I can do better than that. I can keep you alive and make you answer me—truthfully, too. Fritz, fasten an electric wire to him."

The Dutch boy nodded.

Securing two wires to two binding posts on the lever board, he took the other ends and bound them around the man's wrists.

"Dot's all righd," announced he, stepping back.

"Now, my good fellow," said the young inventor, as he grasped a lever, "I do not want to be cruel and torture you, and I will therefore give you an opportunity of doing as I say. If you refuse I shall have no mercy on you. This is a desperate deal and it requires desperate measures to win. If you do not truthfully answer me, I will send an electric current through you until you comply. Do you hear?"

A volley of blasphemy from the man was his only reply.

Jack calmly waited until he ceased, and then asked:

"Now, what is your name, sir?"

"I won't tell yer!" roared the man.

Jack pulled the lever and gave the man a powerful shock.

He yelled, writhed, squirmed, swore, and made horrible faces.

Observing that he was determined not to yield, Jack slowly but surely increased the current until the fellow burst into a cold sweat, his eyes bulged out, his hair stood on end, and his body and limbs became twisted out of shape.

It was wonderful that he had the courage to stand it so long, but it soon became so unbearable that he screamed imploringly:

"Stop it, for God's sake! I'll speak!"

"Your answer!" demanded Jack, sternly, as he cut out the current.

"Joe Brandon," came the tremulous reply.

"Didn't you and two others try to blow up this raft?"

"If I tell's yer will put me in jail."

"Answer!"

"I won't!"

Out came the lever.

A howl of agony escaped the man.

"I'll make a clean breast of it!" he screamed.

Again Jack stopped the current.

"Go on!" he exclaimed.

"I was one o' them what tried to blow her up."

"Why did you do it?"

"'Cause I was paid fer it."

"By whom?"

"David Dixon."

"The ship-owner, of New York?"

"Yes, that's ther bloke."

"And he paid you to watch here?"

"O' course. Skeered mebbe we didn't succeed blowin' her up."

"And if you saw us on the raft—what then?"

"We was to send him a telegraph to a office in Boston."

"Ah, I see. Now what did he want to destroy my boat for?"

"So's yer couldn't use it ter go after ther wreck o' ther Blue Bird."

"Was he one of the three who broke into my workshop?"

"Yes," replied the prisoner, sullenly. "Me an' Tom Hoe was the other two."

"Do you know why he didn't want me to raise that wreck?"

"No. He didn't tell me none o' his business."

"I suppose your partner, Tom Hoe, will now let him know about your capture?"

"Likely as not he will," assented Joe Brandon, with a scowl.

"That will do. I'll keep you as evidence against your employer."

"There comes another row-boat!" said Tim, glancing out the window.

"More of the rascals?"

"Lordy, no—it's ther lighthouse keeper."

"Good! He's a friend of mine. I'll send this villain to jail in his care."

The row-boat soon reached the wrecking raft, and the man in it rounded his skiff and shouted to the young inventor:

"Hello there, Jack!"

"What is it, Luke Lamps?"

"I heard some firin' goin' on out here, an' came out to see what the trouble was," replied the lighthouse keeper.

"Just had a fight. I've got a prisoner on board," answered Jack, "and I'd like to have you carry him ashore, and lodge him in jail pending my return. You can charge him in my name with having attempted to kill me and blow up my workshop."

"So that was what caused the explosion which startled every one nearly a week ago, is it?" inquired Luke Lamps.

"Yes. Be careful not to let him escape. He's important to me. I can't be bothered taking him with me on this cruise and have no time to bring him ashore myself."

"Leave him to me, Jack—you could trust me with your life," replied the lighthouse keeper. "Send him out."

Tim and Fritz carried the man and put him in the skiff.

"Jack wounded him in the shoulder," said Tim. "Better 'tend to it when ye gets him ashore, Luke, or he'll bleed ter death."

"Small loss if he pegged out, I reckon, Tim," laughed the lighthouse keeper.

He then wished them good bye, and rowed away toward the lighthouse with the prisoner, and Tim and Fritz went back to Jack.

The boy started the wrecking raft ahead.

She ran out upon the dark, heaving sea, and turning northward, proceeded toward Nova Scotia.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MYSTERY OF THE SCUTTLED SHIP.

"TURN out! Turn out!"

"It can't be morning yet!"

"All hands ter quarters!"

"What's the matter, Tim?"

"Land ho! Land ho!"

"What land do you make out?"

"Seal Island, my hearty."

"Our destination?"

"Ay, an' thar's a ship here ahead o' us."

"A ship?"

"Schooner, I reckon. Anchored, too."

"Near the sunken Blue Bird?"

"Close to the buoy."

"By jingo! What does that mean?"

"This binocular shows me some divers on her deck."

"Worse and worse."

"An', blast me, if I don't think they're a-divin' fer ther treasure on board o' ther sunken wreck, Jack!" cried Tim, in deep dismay.

Daylight had not broken yet.

Tim had been on duty at the wheel alone.

Jack and Fritz had been fast asleep in their bunks.

Upon hearing the old sailor's warning cry, though, they aroused themselves, and getting up, they peered ahead out the window.

The Kingfisher had reached her destination, and in the dim light they saw a large black schooner lying at anchor, close to the white painted keg-buoy, which Fritz had flung overboard to mark the spot where the Blue Bird had gone down.

Upon her decks were a number of men, comprising the crew, in the midst of whom stood two divers in full costume.

The name of the schooner on the bow was the Bull Dog, and she looked as if she had not been there long, as her sails were lowered in lazy-jacks, and some of the men were furling them.

"Stop the raft!" said Jack, hastily dressing himself.

Tim obeyed, and the young inventor, observing that no lights were burning on the Kingfisher, saw that she was not seen yet by any of the people upon the other craft.

He then glanced at the registers.

The air compartments were empty, and the boy pulled a lever, putting the air-pump in operation down below.

Foot after foot of atmosphere was rapidly compressed into the reservoirs, and the boy keeping his glance upon the gauge soon saw that the compartments were filled with enough to last twelve hours.

He then stopped the pump.

"Close all the doors and windows!" he exclaimed quickly.

Fritz attended to this, and as soon as the water-tight openings were secured, the boy pulled another lever, opening the water valves.

A stream poured into the central chamber, and the raft sunk.

Down she went, foot by foot, as the weight of the water gushing in overcame the buoyancy of the confined air, and within a few minutes she was completely submerged.

Jack then unscrewed the tube of an air-injector, letting in a flow of atmosphere from the reservoirs, and unfastening a valve to let out the carbotic acid, he opened a screw-cap that let in a sprayed solution of quicklime, water, and potash, to purify the air.

They could now breathe as conveniently as if they were on the surface, and the young inventor caused the raft to sink until the depth register marked fifteen feet from the surface.

He then stopped the descent.

"You vos susbeet dose vellers in dot poat?" asked Fritz.

"Their object is very apparent," replied the boy. "They are not here to raise the ship. If they were, they would have brought the right sort of boat to do it. Besides, we have the contract for that job. I can only infer then that they are after the treasure that is in her."

"How could any strangers know thar's that gold aboard o' her?" asked Tim, skeptically. "I thinks as yer mistaken, Jack."

"There were few people who knew of the gold being on board of the Blue Bird," answered Jack. "They were the bankers, ship-owners, the captain, the murdered man—Bob Bowline—and ourselves. The bankers wanted us to save it. The captain is in jail, Bowline is dead, and according to the story of our late prisoner, Tom Brandon, it seems that David Dixon didn't want us to go after it. His own actions to me proved that. He made a desperate attempt to blow this craft to pieces to stop us. Now, why was this done? Why is this strange craft here ahead of us with divers on it? You must remember that Dixon claimed to know where the wreck lay."

Tim and Fritz exchanged places.

Everything was evident enough to them now.

"Here is my theory," continued Jack, "and I'd swear to it. The ship-owner wanted to delay us so that he could come to this spot with a vessel before we could get here, send a diver down, raise the treasure, and convert it to his own use!"

This was just exactly what Tim and Fritz suspected.

In fact, they said so.

The secret of David Dixon's antagonism was manifest at last.

Our friends never suspected they would have to encounter an enemy in their work, but now that they understood what they had to content with, it did not frighten them in the least.

"Let us go down to the wreck and guard it against the rascals," said Jack. "We must drive the thieves away. If they succeed in their plans we may ultimately raise the Blue Bird, but the wreck will be stripped of its treasure."

"All I vant is to meet vun auf 'em," growled Fritz. "I dितn'd vand nodings better as a fight mit 'em alretty."

"Bein' as we may want ter leave ther raft under water," said Tim, "I'll get our divin' suits out so's we kin put 'em on."

While he was going to get them, Jack turned on the electric lights, and a mellow glow poured out of the ground glass lamps.

He then turned on the search-light, and an enormous streak started ahead of the raft, in the shape of a cone, and brilliantly illuminated the water ahead.

It was then six o'clock, and they could remain submerged until at least five the following evening ere coming up for fresh air.

Numerous fishes surrounded the raft as the boy started it ahead, and took on more water ballast.

She went down at an angle, and in a few minutes Jack saw the galvanized buoy chain glistening ahead of them.

As soon as the Kingsfisher reached it, he stopped her.

Then he opened the water valves wider.

She shipped more ballast and sunk perpendicularly, but kept a level keel, as all the weight was bearing on the bottom.

As she descended, the outside pressure made some difference in the air they breathed, but gave them no difficulty.

At a depth of seventy-five feet they distinguished the masts of the Blue Bird some distance ahead in the rays of the search-light, and soon afterwards saw her hull.

The water became darker at one hundred feet.

It was also filled with aquatic vegetation.

Twenty feet further down, and the raft landed on the sandy bottom with a slight jar, and Jack closed the water valves.

He now had a good view of the wreck.

She had fallen into a mass of black, slimy rocks, and was jammed tightly in a rift, from whence Jack saw that it would be a most difficult task to liberate her.

The boat was held suspended ten feet from the bottom by these rocks, and stood bolt upright, as if she were sailing.

Tim now came back with their diving suits, and they put them on and left the visors open.

These suits were made of metal scales that fitted close to their bodies, the tops being surmounted by copper helmets, on top of which were poised electric lamps, fed from batteries carried on their backs.

The batteries rested upon cylinders containing compressed air, which was automatically set into the helmets, and they each wore a belt, in which they carried sheath-knives and air-pistols.

"I am going out to inspect that wreck," said Jack, "and I wish you would keep a watch, as the strange divers might come down while I am so engaged and interfere with me."

He then closed his visor and turned on his supply of air.

Entering the water chamber and closing the door, he let in the sea, filled the compartment and opened the outer door.

Stepping out upon the deck, the boy turned on his electric lamp, and seeing that there was a hard, sandy bottom, he debarked.

Walking over to the Blue Bird, he passed under her hull, and a startled cry escaped him as he glanced upward.

"The reason this ship sunk was because she was scuttled!" he cried, for he had seen a dozen or more large auger holes bored through the bottom planks.

Jack was startled and amazed.

When the pursuit of the ship was carried on not a soul had been seen on board of her, and it was now very evident to the boy that she had been scuttled right before his eyes.

Who did it?

What became of the person?

No one left her when she sank, that he could see.

Why had she been scuttled?

A most puzzling mystery surrounded the ship.

Thinking the perpetrator of the deed might have been carried down with the wreck, Jack boarded her and made a thorough search.

Not the slightest vestige of a person was to be found, and no explanation of the mystery could be discovered there.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE ENEMY'S POWER.

WHEN Jack got down in the hold he saw that the only reason there was for the Blue Bird sinking was because she was scuttled.

"It is the work of man's hand. Whether the mystery will ever be solved or not I do not know," he muttered. "But now I will let the perplexing matter rest. We must plug up those holes to make her float upon the surface. It will then be necessary to blast away the rocks which hold her down. Then we can fasten our grapnels to her, hoist her to the top with the raft, pump her out and she'll float."

The ten cases of merchandise in which the gold was hidden were stowed away directly beneath the main hatchway, and as Jack had been given all the particulars, he hunted for them.

He had been told how they looked and that they were marked:

"D. & D.,
"San Fernandina, Fla."

Having located the cases, the boy saw that they had not been disturbed, and he ascended the hatchway ladder toward the deck, as the covers, and, in fact, everything else that was not secured, had been floated away by the currents.

"If the dead body of Bob Bowline lay upon the deck in the scuppers where it was discovered by the crew," thought the boy, as he ascended, "poor Captain Silas Adams is defeated of ever finding the corpse to prove his innocence, as it must have been washed away like everything else when the ship went down."

He reached the coming of the hatch and stepped on deck.

But scarcely had he gained an upright position when he felt something grip his arm, and turning his body he saw that he stood between two men in divers' costumes.

They each had seized him by an arm.

For an instant the boy was so amazed that he could not move, but as soon as he recovered his faculties he saw that the men each had a life-line and air-hose trailing after them.

They were evidently the divers from the schooner.

As soon as he realized this, he knew that they were enemies, and he made an effort to get away from them.

Instantly a desperate struggle ensued between the three.

Jack was not encumbered with such trailing lines as his two antagonists had, and therefore enjoyed more freedom of action; but the men were very powerful fellows, and evidently had made up their minds to hold him at all hazards.

He soon found that it was almost useless to try and fight them off, as he was no match for either of them.

Nor could he reach his weapons, as one of them had plucked them from his belt and cast them on the deck.

He glanced down at the wrecking raft from which the search-light was gleaming up at him, and saw the sea door open and Fritz come hurrying out, fully armed.

Tim stood in the pilot-house, in the act of raising the raft up to the deck of the ship.

It was very evident to Jack that his friends had seen the two divers come down and attack him, and that they were intent upon going to his rescue.

Unfortunately, the strange divers saw what Tim and Fritz intended to do, for they had seen what the raft was by the electric lights.

One of them signaled to be hauled up, and the other did the same.

Keeping a tight grip on the young inventor, when their friends began to draw them surfaceward, they lifted Jack up with them.

The boy's friends saw him disappearing in the two divers' clutches, and the fat boy hastened ahead, while Tim sent the raft flying surfaceward after the young inventor.

It was of no use, however.

Before the raft was half way to the surface, Jack was hauled from the sea between the two divers and pulled upon the deck of the black schooner.

Here the crew made a rush for him.

He glanced swiftly around at their faces, and saw that one of them was Tom Hoe, the spy who had been with Joe Brandon in the row-boat when the Kingfisher left Wrightstown Bay.

It was daylight now, and the sun was rising.

Near the boy stood two air-pumps, the wheels of which two men were turning, to keep the divers supplied.

The crew fell upon the boy, and taking him from the hands of the divers, they tied him hand and foot, and flung him on the deck.

As soon as the divers got their helmets open, they cried:

"Jack Wright's under-water wrecking raft is here!"

"Whereabouts?" demanded the captain of the crew.

"Lying upon the bottom near the wreck."

"Who is this, diver?"

"A fellow we caught emerging from the Blue Bird's hold."

"He must belong to the boy inventor's crew then?"

"Of course. He was examining the cargo."

"Do his companions know you have captured him?"

"They do, for they pursued us with their raft as we were ascending."

"Our chances of carrying out Mr. Dixon's plans are diminished then, as they have arrived upon the field as soon as we did."

"Didn't I tell yer as me an' Joe Brandon seen 'em a-stealin' out o' Wrightstown Bay on their funny lookin' craft?" interposed Tom Hoe. "They've ketched poor Joe too. If I hadn't a took ther train from Wrightstown up ter Boston, knowin' yer was to start from thar, I wouldn't a-been able ter let yer know as the Kingfisher wasn't destroyed, but had only been hurt some, was repaired, an' then was on her way here."

The fact that Jack was there with his raft caused the whole crew considerable uneasiness, and they began to excitedly discuss the situation, when a man came out of the cabin.

It was the tall, thin, side-whiskered Mr. Dixon.

He was apprised of what had happened.

With a startled look he rushed over to Jack and peered down at the boy, wondering who he was.

One glance through the glass in his visor showed Jack who it was, and any doubts he may have had lingering in his mind about Dixon's rascality were now dissipated.

"The ship-owner!" he muttered.

Dixon could not distinguish Jack's features, and he turned to the two divers and asked them:

"Do you know how to open that fellow's helmet?"

"Not exactly, but we can try," replied one of them. "It's a different looking suit from any I've ever seen before. He don't need life-line or air-tube, but seems to carry atmosphere in that cylinder. Shall we open his visor, sir?"

"Yes. I wish to question him about his companions."

Jack could not hear any of this dialogue.

The two men knelt down beside him, and as soon as they began to examine the visor, Jack realized what they were up to.

Fastened with small thumb-screws, the visor glasses were soon opened by the divers, they closed his air valve, and as Dixon now caught a glimpse of the boy's face, he recoiled, exclaiming:

"It's Jack Wright himself, by thunder!"

The crew were all amazed to hear this.

Dixon had made a clean breast of his intentions to these men, and as an inducement to them to exert themselves to the utmost, he offered to divide half of whatever gold they recovered among them equally.

With such an incentive, and as they had all been chosen with a view to obtaining lawless characters, it was not at all strange that they were willing to commit crime to obtain gold.

Jack had sized them all up correctly.

"Dixon is no honest business man, or he would not embark upon a criminal enterprise of this sort," the boy cogitated. "I'm of the opinion that he was driven by want to commit this desperate deed."

As soon as the ship-owner got over the shock of surprise he returned to Jack's side, and exclaimed, harshly:

"So it's you, is it?"

"Yes, and I now understand the motive you had for not wishing me to contract for raising the Blue Bird," replied Jack. "I have forced a confession of your villainy from Joe Brandon."

"Has that hound broken his oath by giving me away?"

"Compelled to confess, he told how you tried to blow up my raft, in company with Tom Hoe and himself—"

"Exposed—exposed!" interposed Dixon, bitterly.

"This is a dirty piece of work for a noted ship-owner."

"That be hanged! Speculation, wine and the gambling den have been undermining me a long time. Financially ruined by this time, my creditors must know it. A bold stroke for this buried million will redeem me in a foreign land."

These few words explained the motive of Dixon's crimes to Jack, and he exclaimed, angrily:

"Well, you'll never get the gold."
 "Why won't I?" savagely asked Dixon.
 "Because I will save it from your clutches."
 "Remember you are in my power."
 "Oh, that makes little difference. My friends will get it."
 "We will either have that gold," hissed the ship-owner,
 "or you will perish! I shall stop at no crime to carry my point."

"Dare you threaten me that way?"
 "I would kill you to succeed!" hissed Dixon. "Your friends know I have you. They must be informed that unless they depart from here at once, and leave that gold alone, you will be returned to them a corpse!"

CHAPTER IX.

UNDER THE SEA.

BENEATH the water, Tim had driven the wrecking raft almost to the surface, when he saw the futility of going further.

"Kneelhaul the lubberly pirates, they've hoisted him aboard o' their craft!" he growled, bringing the craft to a pause. "By gosh, wat did Jack allow 'em ter grapple him fer? Now he's in a nice plight. Mebbe they'll kill him. Lord save us, wat'll I do?"

He turned the situation over carefully in his mind, and finding no solution of the puzzle, he finally made up his mind to descend to the bottom again, pick up Fritz, lay the matter before him, and devise a means of rescuing Jack.

Accordingly he pulled a lever, shipped ballast, and while the craft was descending, he steered her toward the light of the Dutch boy's helmet lamp which he saw twinkling below in the gloom.

As the Kingfisher was nearing the bottom again the old sailor saw that his friend was in peril.

The Dutch boy had been assailed by a dozen or more huge sharks, and had jammed himself into a crevice among the rocks, from which they were trying to drag him.

Down went the boat to the bottom, and the dazzling rays of its electric lights frightened the man-eaters away.

Tim closed the visor of his helmet, and stumping into the store-room, he grasped two long brass cylinders from a case, and made his way out on deck with them.

By this time the sharks were back at Fritz, making desperate but ineffectual attempts to reach him, for the gleam of his metallic suit had tempted their voracity.

As long as the Dutch boy was beset by these monsters he could not get back to the boat, and for Tim to have gone to his rescue would have been disastrous.

He hastened up to the two pneumatic guns upon the forward deck, and opened the breech of one and thrust in the big brass cylinder.

He then turned a wheel, compressing the air that was in the reservoir on top, and having closed the breech again, he aimed the gun.

Fritz had seen what he was doing, and got down as low as he could between the great bowlders to shield his body.

Taking care to aim so that none of the flying particles would injure the Dutch boy, Tim turned the gun crank.

A terrific roar of the water followed.

As the projectile shot from the gun it left a white streak behind where it tore through the brine on its way to the rocks.

Then it struck an enormous bowlder near Fritz, around which the sharks were swarming thickest.

It was charged with a high explosive called horrorite, which Jack had invented, and the moment it touched the rock it exploded.

A dull rumble followed.

The water was scattered in every direction for a moment, and the rock was shattered to fragments, its pieces flying everywhere.

Several of the sharks were torn to pieces.

The rest fled precipitately.

Shielded by the bowlders, Fritz was not hurt.

Chuckling over the success of his shot, Tim loaded the other gun and sent a second projectile flying after the monsters, and the Dutch boy hastened from his retreat.

Fritz lost no time at getting back aboard of the raft, and Tim saw that he was not injured in the least.

It was a great relief to the old sailor.

They went inside and opened their visors.

"Holy smoke!" gasped Fritz. "Did yer see 'em?"

"See wot?" anxiously asked Tim.

"Der sharks."

"Good Lord! ain't I got one eye left?"

"I t'ought I was goner get pickled in vun ouf deir stomachs."

"Wot a pity yer wuzn't!"

"Dit yer vos safed Shack?"

"No! They got him out o' ther water too quick."

"Shiminey crickets! He in deir bower vos den?"

"That's about ther size of it," dolefully replied Tim.

"Didn'd yer vos do nodings to helb him vonct?"

"Fer sure I did. I struck one o' them divers in ther mid-ship section with ther prow o' ther raft an' knocked him forty feet in ther air arter he lef' ther water. Ther other one caught it on ther stern an' wuz doubled in two an' knocked ten fathoms ter ther wind'ard."

"Den how dey got Shack on deir shibs?"

"Chucked him up, I reckon," confessed Tim, glibly.

"Donner vetter! vhy yer don't dell der druth vonct?"

"Don't growl. We must find a way o' savin' him, Fritz."

"Vell, how ve done id?"

"Ay, that's what I want ter know."

Tim reflected a moment in silence.

If Jack had fallen into the hands of their enemies, he knew that they would make good use of him to further their own purposes.

"Ve don't could do nodings until ve found oud how lays der landt," said he, presently. "Don't ve vos petter go oop und see oursellufs dot?"

"Ay, that's a werry good plan," assented Tim. "It brings back ter my mind a leetle incident wot happened ter me when I wuz in ther——"

"Rats!" shrieked a rasping voice just then.

It was the parrot, Bismark.

He came flying in, pursued by the monkey, as they had escaped from their cages, and had been having a terrific fight.

"Shnt up, yer blamed swab!" roared Tim, and he shielded his tobacco-box at the bird, and missing the parrot hit the monkey.

Whiskers set up a terrific yell and scampered away.

Thinking the monkey was afraid of him, Bismark uttered a shriek, and went sailing out after him.

"Hnroar!" roared Fritz, delightedly. "You vos aim for de gooses und hit de chicken."

"Belay thar, can't yer?" growled Tim. "I wuz jest a-spinnin' a yarn. As I wnz a-sayin', ther ole frigate Wabash wuz caught in a gale, and one o' her rudder lines broke. Straight fer a rocky shore she plunged. Wot ter do ter stop her, no one knowed but me."

"Und vot dit yer do?"

"Yer see, we had a Dutch cook aboard jist like you. He was sich a awful blower, that when I sent him up forward, and he begun ter talk, his gassin' wuz so much stronger, ther gale that it drove ther frigate back from ther rock, and all hands wuz saved from——"

Bill! came a wet towel; it caught Tim in the mouth and stopped him, and with a roar of laughter, Fritz scudded from the pilot-house.

"Dot's vun on me!" he roared.

"Jerusalem! If I didn't ha' ter hang onter this wheel I'd run yer down and jettison wot little cargo thar is stowed in yer figger-head!" yelled Tim, as he glared at the fat boy.

He had started the raft for the surface, and a minute afterwards she burst from the brine near the schooner.

The moment David Dixon's men saw her, they made a rush for the bulwarks and peered down at the raft.

Opening a window, Tim yelled:

"Schooner ahoy!"

"What do you want?" demanded Dixon.

"Jack Wright!"

"You can't have him!"

"D'yer see them guns on our deck?"

"I do, and I'm not afraid of them!"

"Unless yer sets ther lad aboard here I'll blow up yer craft!"

"Listen, my good fellow: The moment you attempt to do anything of that sort I'll have your friend shot!"

"Ther deuce yer will!" growled Tim, uneasily.

"Now take warning and clear out!"

"Wot! Leave ther wreck ter you?"

"There is no alternative. I'll own it, or Wright dies!"

"Ach Gott! Here's a go!" said Fritz, in dismay.

"He's got us by the neck," groaned Tim. "But I'll dump ther warmints. We can't do anything, or they'll murder Jack."

"Vot vay you der pest ouf dem could got?" queried Fritz.

"I'll go down below again, git ther gold aboard o' ther raft, an' when they goes arter it, they won't find nuthin'."

"You t'ink Shack vos all right for der bresents?"

"Ay. They've werry likely made a prisoner o' him."

The old sailor did not say another word to Dixon, but closed the window and sunk the boat down beside the wreck.

Here he left her, and going out into the water with a knife in his hand, he cut the Bull-Dog's anchor rope.

The schooner gradually drifted away with the current.

Tim also sent the buoy adrift.

By this means the location of the wreck was hidden.

He then raised the raft over the wreck near the open hatch, and securing her there, he ran a cable from the machinery in the cage, and thence around the drum-wheel aft.

There was a hook in the end and a sling was fastened to it, and by using this machine and line, the treasure cases were hauled upon the deck of the raft.

As soon as they were all brought up, the old sailor drove the raft a half a mile away, brought her to a pause, and they opened the cases and took out the gold.

It was stowed away in the hold of the raft, and the cases were abandoned as useless.

Not so much ballast was now needed to keep the raft submerged; indeed, she could scarcely rise to the surface now.

Resolving to bury it on Seal Island, Tim drove the raft away under the water, just as the shadows of evening fell.

CHAPTER X.

ON BOARD THE SCHOONER.

FOR some time after the disappearance of the raft under water the crew of the Bull-Dog stood discussing the situation.

Tim had left them in doubt of his intentions by leaving so abruptly and not saying whether he would obey Dixon or not.

No one noticed that the schooner was adrift until at least half an hour after Tim had cut the anchor rope, and severed the grapnel from the end of the buoy-chain.

"I don't believe we will have any trouble with the crew of that raft," said Dixon to his two divers. "They fear that we may do Wright an injury if they play any treachery upon us. I think it will be quite safe for you to venture down to the Blue Bird again. We must hoist up those boxes of treasure as soon as possible and then get away from here. Go down again."

"All right," assented one of the divers. "But we've got to look out that they don't tackle us under the sea and try to even up matters by capturing and holding us as hostages to exchange for our prisoner. If they do, our case is lost."

"Exercise care, that's all."

The men were stationed at the air pumps, and the divers went to the port bulwarks over which hung a weighted rope-ladder.

No sooner had they glanced over at the water, when they noticed that both the schooner and the buoy were adrift.

"Thunder! Our anchor's dragging!" cried one.

"No—it's gone. See how slack the hawser is," said the other.

"What's that?" demanded Dixon in amazement.

"The buoy is adrift, too!" said the first speaker.

"I'll bet this is the work of Wright's friends!" cried the second.

"By the furies, you've told the truth!" shouted Dixon. "They must have cast us adrift, to hide the location of the wreck."

The men hauled in the cable, and saw that the line had been severed where it had been spliced to the ring in the end of the anchor.

This was evidence enough for the crew of the black schooner.

With a fierce look upon his dark face, Dixon glared around.

For the life of him he could not locate the spot where his craft had lain at anchor, for he had been guided wholly by the white buoy, and that was adrift too.

"How long have we been floating with the current?" he asked.

"It's about half an hour since the raft went down," said one of the divers, "and we've very likely been adrift ever since, as they have probably done this as soon as they went down."

"Which way does the current carry us?"

"In a circle around Ieal Island."

"Then we can't locate where we were anchored?"

"I'm afraid not, as no bearings of the place were taken."

"Then, by heavens! I'll anchor here, and send you down every two hundred feet as we work our way back against this current, until we locate that wreck again."

"There is no other way to recover it."

Dixon gave his orders, and they were carried out.

The day passed away, the schooner working her way back against the current, and each diver alternately making descents to the bottom, looking for the wreck.

Shadows of twilight fell upon the sea.

As yet, nothing was found of the scuttled ship.

Dixon kept his men working incessantly, for he was in a fever of restless agitation, and feared he would lose the treasure.

He paused in front of Jack, who yet lay bound upon the deck, and bending over the boy, shook his fist at him, and hissed:

"If I should not find the ship again you'll catch it!"

"You're a spiteful hound," replied the boy, fearlessly. "I'm delighted that my friends have played this trick upon you. If you should be silly enough to injure me, do you know what they would do to you? They would put a torpedo under this schooner and blow her to atoms. You have me at your mercy only to a limited extent. So long as you leave me alone, you are safe. The moment you hurt me, your lives hang by a thread. We understand each other now, don't we?"

A snarling reply escaped Dixon.

He knew that Jack told the truth.

At that moment the cook came along with a tray of food.

"Say, are you going to starve me to death?" demanded Jack.

"Haven't you had any food?" asked Dixon.

"Not a morsel has passed my lips to-day."

"Well, I don't want to kill you that way. Here, cook."

"Yes, sah," replied the negro, pausing.

"Is that my supper?"

"Yes, sah."

"I have no appetite for it."

"Yes, sah."

"Feed it to the prisoner."

"Yes, sah."

The cook laid the tray down upon the deck, pulled Jack

up to a sitting posture, and Dixon strode away to attend to the divers.

Jack was very hungry and thirsty, and ate and drank ravenously as the sable cook fed him.

While this was going on, the schooner paused, and the divers went down the rope ladder to search for the wreck again.

By the time Jack had almost finished eating, they re-appeared.

As soon as they opened their helmets Dixon asked, eagerly:

"Well—any luck yet?"

"Yes, we've found the Blue Bird," answered one of the divers.

"Good!"

"But the treasure is gone!"

"What!" yelled Dixon, wildly.

"The ten cases have been taken out of the main hatchway."

"Rohhed! Cheated! Baffled!" yelled Dixon, in a paroxysm of fury.

"Good for Tim and Fritz!" muttered Jack, with a thrill of joy.

The rage of Dixon and his crew was awful, for they now knew that the Kingfisher had been to the wreck, after cutting them adrift to get rid of them, and had taken the treasure away.

It flashed across Jack's mind that the rascals would, perhaps visit their vengeance upon him now, and he made up his mind to get away from the schooner.

While quietly lying there all day the boy had been industriously sawing his wrist bonds upon the edges of the scales of his suit.

By this means he had chafed and worn the marline lashings almost through, and then burst the bonds.

With his hands behind his back out of the cook's sight, the boy rapidly worked the severed cords loose, and got his wrists out of them. But his ankles were securely bound yet.

As soon as he had the use of his arms he doubled up his fist and suddenly dealt the cook a blow between the eyes that knocked him over upon the deck.

The blow came so unexpectedly that the negro was startled and uttered a terrific yell as he rolled into the scuppers.

Quick as a flash Jack seized a sharp-pointed table knife from the food tray and cut his ankles free.

Bounding to his feet he was observed by the crew.

"The prisoner is free!" yelled Dixon.

"Go for him!"

"Down with him!"

"Don't let him escape!"

"Fire on the lubber!"

"He has killed the cook!"

"Look out, he's got a knife!"

These and similar cries pealed from the crew.

Headed by Dixon, they made a rush across the deck for the young inventor, when Jack climbed upon the bulwarks.

He rapidly closed the visor of his helmet and turned the air-screw.

Under his weighted feet hung the diver's rope ladder down into the water, where it descended about fifty feet.

"He's going to dive overboard!" yelled Dixon.

"If he does he will get killed," grimly said one of the divers.

"Why will he?"

"The depth is one hundred and twenty feet."

"Well, what of it?"

"His weights will carry him down like a shot."

"Ah, I see!"

"He will fall as if through the air."

"I hope he will."

"When he strikes bottom the shock will kill him."

"I will have vengeance for the loss of the treasure."

"Stop him, or we may have murder to answer for."

"Never! I'll drive him to his doom!" hissed the ship-owner.

He drew a revolver from his pocket and aimed it at Jack.

He fired a shot at the boy and the ball struck him.

Fortunately the metal suit was bullet proof and the young inventor was not injured by the ball.

He waved his hand defiantly at his foes, and just as Dixon fired several more shots at him he leaped.

Striking the water with a splash, he sank out of sight, and the crew of the schooner rushed to the bulwarks and peered over.

They did not see the boy, however.

Down shot Jack toward the bottom.

The boy had calculated his desperate chances, however, and gauged himself to go down close to the rope ladder.

He caught it as he fell, and it checked his flight; then he descended to the bottom of it and let himself drop off into the gulf below.

CHAPTER XI.

THE STARVING PRISONER.

As the Kingfisher drew close to Seal Island, Fritz and Tim were amazed to see that the bottom of the sea was strewn with an almost impassable barrier of the wrecks of many ships.

All the islands about Nova Scotia were the scenes of the most terrible shipwrecks, as the coast thereabouts is very dangerous.

The old sailor raised the raft over the mounds of sand that covered the majority of the rotting hulks, and said:

"Wot a wealth we could gather from them 'ere wessels if we had time ter go sarchin' among 'em, Fritz."

"Vell, I tink ve don't petter shtop now," replied the Dutch boy, "'cause der sooner ve got rid ouf dem golt pars, der sooner ve back to helb Shack couldt go alretty."

"Which side o' ther islan' shall we land on?"

"I don't know me dot, as I never vas been here."

"Then I'll go ter ther surface, an' we kin see how ther land lies," said Tim. "We must be close ter shore, as it's shoalin' up now."

As the weight of the gold was over three thousand pounds, and the weight of water ballast required to sink the raft was nearly the same, the sailor had some trouble to get her to the surface.

He pumped all the water out of her, and she arose so slowly that it occupied half an hour to near the surface.

There was only one way to overcome the sinking weight, and Tim at once started the air-pump when her deck was out.

More air had to be taken in.

He could not get her up high enough to make the pump work, so he turned a switch, and the upright screws along the sides began to spin the reverse way.

They lifted the raft until the screws came to the surface.

He was then enabled to get in more air, and the raft then ascended to the surface, and floated there.

"We consumed a lot o' ther air when under water," said Tim, "an' if we'd a-had it, we'd a-got aloft sooner."

"I tink so neider," assented Fritz, as he peered out the window. "Dere vas de island now vunct."

The raft was upon the western side of Seal Island, and Tim ran her close to the shore and sent her ahead.

"Keep a look out fer a good landin'," cautioned the old salt.

"Fer sure I vill," replied Fritz, going out on deck.

When the raft got around on the northern side of the island the fat boy saw a sheltered lagoon indenting the coast.

"Here vas der place!" he shouted, pointing at it.

The gloom of night had fallen.

Great fog banks were drifting in patches upon the sea and the old sailor steered the Kingfisher into the lagoon.

She entered upon a still body of water surrounded by trees.

The shores were lined with broken branches and fallen leaves, dense clumps of bushes, and here and there a mass of rock towered up, half buried in moss and verdure.

Tim turned on the search-light and swept its misty rays upon the gloomy shore, when he suddenly observed a dark opening in the rocks on the left hand side.

"It's a water cave!" he exclaimed.

"Vill ve put der golt in dere?" asked Fritz.

"Ay, ve couldn't find a better place."

"Den send her ower to der openin' till ve see vot it is."

The rock projected out into the water, and in the middle of it, close to the surface, was a large, dark opening.

Sending the raft up close to it, and driving in the rays of the search-light, Tim saw that there was a cavern within.

He stopped the raft at the entrance and Fritz debarked.

He penetrated the cavern with a lantern in his hand, and saw that it was a large chamber, the wall broken in a dozen fissures in various places.

"Yust der blace for vot ve vant," he muttered, in satisfied tones, as he found a niche in the wall which could easily be covered up. "Here vas der werry blace for dot golt."

Returning to Tim, he told him what he had seen, and when the old sailor had inspected the place, they carried the golden bars in and deposited them in the repository.

Every bit of the gold was carried into the cavern and stored away, and when their task was finished, they carefully filled up the opening with stones and bushes, until it would have been impossible for any one to have detected what was hidden inside, unless it was discovered by accident.

"It's safe here," said Tim. "Now we kin go back aboard o' ther raft, an' return ter ther schooner. Dave Dixon won't ever clay eyes on them 'ere wallybles agin, I'll bet, an' we kin come back here when we've saved Jack from his clutches an' go away wi' ther gold."

"I tink ve petter shoot at dot schooners mit our guns," said Fritz. "Dere don't vos some uses in dalkin' mit dot Tixon's alretty, because he vas a bick fool."

They started for the entrance of the cavern, when a most unearthly yell suddenly reached their ears.

Both started and came to a pause.

"Shiver me—wot's that?" gasped Tim, glancing around.

"A vild peast," said Fritz.

"No, it was a human critter."

"Got oud! Who efer hear a man's voice like dot?"

"Hark! There it goes again."

A prolonged shriek rang out—rather smothered - but full of agony, and without doubt in a man's voice.

They could not locate the place it proceeded from despite their efforts to do so, and stood staring blankly at each other.

For a moment a deathly silence ensued.

"Donner retter!" gasped Fritz, uneasily, "where dot voices come from?"

"Tain't in this 'ere cavern," replied Tim in positive tones.

"Mebbe dot feller see us put de golt here"

"I reckon not, as I kept watch, an' didn't see nobody. Besides, if any one seen us, they wouldn't let on," replied Tim.

"S'bose ve looks in doses bassages in der vall."

"Got a pistol?"

"Yah—two ouf dem."

"Then come on."

They plunged into the fissures, and began to search them. Not a soul was found, and the blood-curdling yells ceased.

Only one passage remained to be explored, and they entered this one together, and it led them back underground a great ways.

Fritz was in advance, and Tim brought up the rear with a lantern, but the Dutch boy suddenly came to a pause.

Ahead of him there was a deep hole in the floor of the passage, this breach being about twenty feet wide, and the hole was so deep that when Fritz flung a stone down he could not hear it strike the bottom.

Just as they came to a pause the awful cry they first heard reached their ears again with startling distinctness.

It came from the rock passage ahead of them.

"Great guns! Thar it is now!" whispered Tim with a shudder.

"On de yudder side ouf dot hole," said Fritz.

"Ah, but we can't git across ter see whar it comes from."

"Nein. Dere ain't no pottom to dis pits."

"Listen! Wat's that?"

"Vot?"

"I thought I heard footsteps."

"Where?"

"On the other side o' ther hole."

They both listened intently.

The patter of approaching footsteps reached their ears, and a few minutes afterwards they suddenly beheld the dim outlines of a man on the other side of the abyss in the gloom.

The figure was but imperfectly seen in the dull light of their lantern, yet they distinguished that he had on nothing but a shirt and a tattered and ragged pair of pants.

For several moments a deep silence prevailed, each party trying to see the other, and our friends became convinced that it was the stranger who uttered the yells.

Then suddenly they heard a low, hoarse voice mutter:

"Who is that?"

"Seamen," replied Tim.

"Not Dave Dixon's men?"

"No. But who in thunder are you?"

"Strangers! strangers!" burst frantically from the man's lips.

"He's looney, I bet vun dollar und fordy cents," whispered Fritz.

"Help, help, for Heaven's sake!" screamed the man wildly.

"Wot ther deuce ails ye?" asked Tim, seeing no sign of danger.

"Save me from this den! I'm starving to death! I'm half crazy from this awful solitude," piteously replied the stranger.

"Yer a-starvin'?"

"It's nearly a week since I've eaten or drank."

"Lord save us! Is that so? How'd ye git thar?"

"Dave Dixon, a wealthy ship-owner, put me here."

"Wot fur?"

"I saw his ship, the Blue Bird, sink off this island——"

"Yes, yes!" eagerly said Tim.

"Dixon had been cruising in a yacht near here, and had come ashore. I was on this island and met him. I told him about the sinking of the Blue Bird, and pointed out to him where she went down. He knocked me senseless then, and when I came to, I found myself in this place without food or water."

"An' it was he who did it?"

"Yes: He probably wanted to put me out of the way so I could not let any one else know where his ship went down."

"This is jist like his dirty work."

"You know the man, then?"

"I reckon we'do. Wot sort of a place are ye in, stranger?"

"A long, narrow passage, with this abyss at one end, and a wall of solid rock at the other extremity. To get me here, he must have thrown something across that gulf."

"Hold on, then, till we goes back to our wessel. We'll bring ye some food and water, and a rope. You kin fasten one end ter yer body an' we'll hold the other end. Then yer kin let yerself go, an' arter yer hits ther wall on this side, we'll hoist yer up."

"Hurry, hurry! I am wild with impatience and anxiety."

Tim and Fritz left the passage, crossed the cavern, and upon reaching the exit from the cavern, to their alarm they saw the schooner coming up the coast toward the lagoon.

"Shiminey Christmas, looker dere!" cried Fritz, pointing at it.

"Ther Bull-Dog, as I live!" exclaimed Tim, vehemently.

"Und maybe Dixon vos coom in here to see his prisoner."

"If we wishes ter save that man, we mustn't let 'em see us."

"How ve could escabe oursellufs dot?"

"By sinkin' ther raft in the water o' ther lagoon."

With this understanding they hastened aboard of the raft, and sinking her where she was, drove her out into the middle of the place, and as the pilot-house was going under,

they saw the schooner run up in the wind and a boat leave her side.

Down went the Kingfisher into twenty feet of water ere she came to a pause upon the muddy bottom.

Tim shut off the electric lights.

A few minutes afterwards, a boat containing a number of men passed by over their heads.

CHAPTER XII.

ALONE AND LOST UNDER WATER.

WHILE Jack was clinging to the end of the rope ladder, hanging down in the water from the schooner, he loosened his back and breast weights.

Realizing that these pieces of lead would carry him to the bottom of the sea like a cannon ball, the boy let them drop the moment he let go the ladder, and the air in his reservoir buoyed his body against an extraordinary descent.

Down he went, however, as there was weight enough fixed to his suit and soles to carry him all the way to the bed of the sea.

He struck with a violent shock, rebounded, and fell again.

For a moment it seemed to the boy as if his legs had been driven up into his body, his nerves tingled all over, and he fell in a heap upon the sand and lay helpless.

Fully five minutes passed by ere the boy recovered from the shock, and assuring himself that he was not injured, rose to his feet, and turned the current into his electric lamp.

He could not walk very well at first, but gradually the use of his legs returned, and he presently felt like himself again.

Glancing around, he saw the Blue Bird close by.

His position was then defined, but the Kingfisher was no where in sight, and he was forced to the disagreeable conclusion that his friends had taken the raft away.

"Jerusalem, what an escape!" he muttered. "I was afraid it was more of a fall than I got. If I hadn't flung off my weights, my life would have paid for my recklessness."

He saw his abandoned weights just then, and picking them up, he put them on, and thought:

"The divers from the Bull-Dog may come down to see what became of me. If I remain here, weaponless as I am, save for this old table knife, with which I cut my bonds, they may carry me up again. I'll go on toward the island. Perhaps I may see some signs of the raft. What could Tim and Fritz have done with her?"

He strode away in the direction the scuttled ship's bowsprit pointed, as he had observed that it headed toward the island, keeping a keen watch for the wrecking raft.

His footsteps stirred up a cloud of sand with every movement, and scores of fishes beset his path, strange looking aquatic vegetation grew on all sides, and ugly and beautiful shell-fish bestrewed the bottom.

None of these things were strange to the young inventor, however, as he had frequently been under the sea in various parts of the globe, and had witnessed marine life in all its forms.

Still the different species and varieties of denizens of the deep interested him as he paddled along, and helped to pass away the time.

He came to a great jungle of alive green grass growing fifty feet high presently, and wishing to keep in a straight line for the island he boldly plunged into it, trusting to fortune to keep his course.

Unfortunately for Jack, it was utterly impossible for human being devoid of compass or other means of guidance save guesswork to travel any distance 120 feet under water, and he became lost.

This was owing to the fact that he had been walking in a semi-circle without knowing it.

Forming a shrewd calculation as to the length of time it should have taken him to have reached the island, and finally discovering that nearly twice that time had elapsed, the boy reluctantly came to the conclusion that his reckoning was lost.

He was yet in the jungle, but kept on persistently, and finally left the tall grass to enter a plain that was dotted with numberless sea cabbages, through which he passed until he came to a forest of gigantic trees.

They were held in suspension, their roots above ground, and scores of various kinds of fishes were darting in and out among them, frightened at the appearance of the boy.

Jack pushed his way through the trees, and had gone about fifty yards in this direction, when suddenly he observed a most violent agitation among the verdure ahead.

It was very evident to him that some great monster of the ocean had become entangled in this forest, and he soon observed its body ripping the trees aside like an avalanche.

The boy retreated back to the sea-cabbage ground.

He had scarcely done so, when the creature made its appearance, darting out from among the trees like lightning.

A cry of astonishment escaped Jack's lips.

"It's a sea serpent!" he gasped.

The creature before him was either a gigantic cephalopod, which are known to frequent the shores of Newfoundland, or else it was a plesiosaurus of the type believed to be extinct.

It resembles an eel, sixty feet in length, and eight feet in diameter, with triangular fins, huge flappers that moved like those of a turtle, and a large round head, while its color was very dark blue.

The glittering of Jack's metallic diving suit attracted the reptile's attention, and it came to a pause, fixing an intent glance of its gleaming eyes upon him.

For a moment it regarded the boy, and then, as quick as a flash it darted at him, and ere he could budge an inch, a fold of its enormous body was coiled around him.

He was held as rigidly as a vise.

The boy expected the creature to contract its body and squeeze the life out of him like a boa-constrictor, but it did not have the power to act that way.

As soon as it caught him, he was lifted from his feet from the bottom, and he saw the serpent's arched neck and enormous head curved around so as it could see him, while the upper part of its body began to sway undulatingly.

The boy managed to keep his left hand free.

With this he grasped the knife, and, with a fearful stab, he drove it into the enormous body up to the handle, and gave the blade a downward sweep that gashed open a frightful wound.

It bled profusely, and there shot a convulsive tremor through the great body, the two extremities of the body coiled themselves and uncoiled, and Jack was released.

Down to the ground he fell, and the monster began to squirm and thresh around so furiously that an enormous cloud of sand was beaten up from the bottom, obscuring the water.

Away dashed the boy as fast as he could force himself through the water, and he soon placed a safe distance between himself and the leviathan.

The light streaking from his helmet lamp showed him the awful convulsions of the monster as it squirmed about in the water, and he soon observed a number of sharks glide out of the surrounding gloom, attracted by their keen scent of blood.

In a moment more these sea cannibals attacked the serpent, and began to devour it alive by tearing great chunks of flesh out of its writhing body.

The boy watched the fearful scene a few minutes, and then hastened away, leaving the sharks feasting upon their prey.

"Should I remain they would very likely attack me next," he muttered. "It was fortunate that the serpent's body was soft, else I could not have plunged the old table-knife into it and made my escape."

He soon put a distance between himself and the sea monsters, and came to a place where the bottom was composed of soft mud.

His weighted shoes sunk into it deeply, and the tenacious stuff clung to him and made it difficult for him to walk.

Upon finding himself placed in a rather disagreeable

not dangerous situation, the boy made an effort to turn about, and retrace his steps to hard ground again.

This was no easy matter to accomplish now, however, as he had gone out so far on the bed of mud that he became confused about the direction he should take.

He went plunging about here and there, every moment getting himself more inextricably tangled up, the soft ooze holding his feet down so that every step cost him a most severe effort, and he soon became tired out.

Jack paused to rest himself.

"Here's a nice plight!" he muttered, ruefully. "Which way am I to go to get out of this? I wish day would break. I might then possibly get enough light to see my way out of this. Heavens! What's this?"

He had only paused a few minutes.

Yet in that time his feet sunk down in the mud, and his legs followed, until they were buried half way to the knees.

There was no rest for the boy now.

The longer he remained quiet, the worse his position became, and with a feeling of intense anxiety, he began to work himself free of the mud, and after a most desperate effort, he managed to get one of his legs free.

As soon as he rested the liberated foot upon the surface of the ooze, to get the other one out, the first one sank down again deeper than it was before.

The situation was becoming serious, and the young inventor found that if he once became firmly lodged there he would have to remain.

Within a short time the supply of air in his cylinder would all be consumed, and if he failed to get out of the sea before that he would very likely be smothered.

"Great Scott!" he gasped, "what am I to do now? There don't seem to be much chance for me to force my way out of this, and I'm getting so tired it seems as if I would have to give up every moment."

His strength was despairing, but his head was cool, calm, and collected, his spirit undaunted, and he made up his mind to make another effort for his life.

Using all his remaining strength, he forced his legs out of the mire again, and then flung himself flat upon his stomach, as he knew that his body would offer a greater resistance than his feet.

In this manner he gained a rest, and recuperated his flagging strength enough to feel renewed hope.

As soon as the boy found himself sinking, he dragged himself along with his hands, and then gained another firm resting place until he was revived.

It then suddenly occurred to him to abandon his weights, as he had enough air left in his cylinder to float him.

Off came the back and the breast plates, and the leaden soles of his shoes followed.

Instantly he floated upward to a height of ten feet from the bottom, and he then began to swim.

This mode of propulsion was easier than walking, and he glided through the water like a fish.

By abandoning the rest of his leaden weights he could arise to the surface, but this he did not do at once, as he feared that he might yet be somewhere near the schooner.

Jack quietly struck out, and passed along above the bottom of the sea, keeping a sharp watch for some signs of the raft and his friends.

CHAPTER XIII.

RAISING THE WRECK.

"Blow me if Dave Dixon an' some o' his crew ain't a-goin' ter ther water cavern whar we stowed ther gold wot we took from ther Blue Bird, an' now we can't go back ter help ther man wot ther ship-owner confined in ther fissure."

"*Donner und blitzen!* Dim, mebbe dey vos found dot places where ve hided de golt und hook it from us."

The old sailor and his friend experienced a feeling of blank dismay stealing over them, and gazed at each other in utter amazement.

"Thar's a way ter perwent 'em a-carryin' off ther gold in ther schooner," said Tim at last, "an' I'm a-goin' ter try it."

"Vos iss?" queried the Dutch boy, interestedly.

"Run ther Kingfisher out ter ther schooner, and tow her away, leavin' them lubbers on ther islan'. That'll leave less o' them fer us ter fight agin', ter git Jack out o' thar power."

"Das iss goot. Come ahead vonct!"

And so saying Fritz grasped the wheel, and pulled a lever which started the upright screws spinning, when the raft arose half a dozen feet from the bottom and was held suspended there.

By grading the rapidity of the revolutions of these screws, he could maintain the raft at any height without emptying ballast.

Fritz then turned the lever controlling the driving screws and the raft drove ahead, turned around, and proceeded back toward the entrance to the lagoon again.

She had scarcely reached it, however, when Tim cried:

"Haul to! Haul to! Gee whiz, lad, wot's that?"

"A funny lookin' fishes!" replied Fritz, looking out.

"No, it ain't."

"Vot it iss den?"

"A man!"

"A mans?"

"Ay—a diver."

"Shiminey!"

"By thunder, it's Jack!"

"Hoop-la! Hurroar!"

Through the water came the boy.

Fritz had turned on the search-light.

As soon as Jack saw it he headed for his raft.

Within a few moments he reached the deck and entered.

This encounter with the Kingfisher was most unexpected to the boy, but he had unconsciously wandered near the mouth of the lagoon in his flight through the brine, and might have entered the place had he kept straight ahead.

As soon as he opened his visor he shook hands with his friends, and then told them what happened to him.

In return they gave him an account of their adventures.

"So you've got the gold!" he cried, delightedly.

"Ay, lad, safely hidden inside the water cave," Tim answered.

"But this prisoner from whom Dixon learned where the ship sunk?"

"We didn't ask him who he was," replied Tim.

"I'm sorry for that."

"Vot you tink ouf stealin' deir schooners?"

"It's a very good plan, for if they should happen to find the gold they can't carry it away from the island on her."

"Den ve go ahet?"

"Of course; by all means."

Buried a few feet beneath the surface the Kingfisher left the lagoon and soon reached the Bull-Dog.

The schooner was hauled up into the wind's eye and stood luffing with flapping canvas when the raft reached her, and Tim went out on deck in his diving suit.

He was armed with a long hawser, to one end of which a cup sucker was attached, and having fastened it to the bow of the schooner, the other end was knotted to a stanchion on the after deck.

Tim then signaled to Fritz to go ahead, and when the fat boy complied, the rope became taut, and the schooner was pulled along after her despite her sails acting contrary.

Away drove the raft to the eastward, the crew of the schooner unable to see her and totally ignorant of what the cause of her strange action was.

Several hours passed by and day finally broke.

Fritz served an excellent breakfast, and the indicator of the log showed Jack that they had carried the schooner about seventy miles away from Seal Island.

The boy then went out on deck, and loosening the hawser, he fastened a torpedo to the schooner's rudder, fired it by electricity, and it was blown to pieces.

"She's disabled now so that it will be some time ere she

can get back to the island," said Jack, when he returned to his friends, "and her crew will very likely sail her to the nearest port for repairs."

"Vot you vos goin' ter do now?" queried Fritz.

"Run back to the wreck of the Blue Bird and raise it."

"Ay, but how about ther gold?" questioned Tim, anxiously.

"It can't run away——"

"An' them lubbers wot's on ther island?"

"They'll have to stay there."

"I'm afeered ther poor prisoner'll starve."

"Oh, I guess not. At any rate, we must take due advantage of the absence of the schooner to raise the scuttled ship. This, I am convinced, can be done in a very short space of time with the facilities we have for the work. Once we get her in tow we can run over to the island, rescue the prisoner, get the gold, and our work will be finished."

"Vas yer goin' to let dot Dixons go free?"

"Not if I can arrest him for his villainy," answered Jack.

"Dot's who's der matter," said the Dutch boy, approvingly.

"When I wuz in ther navy——" said Tim.

"Ach, I vish you vos dere yet."

"A willainous pirate wuz scouragin' ther coast o' Maine," continued Tim, ignoring the interruption. "We wuz despatched arter him, and soon overhauled him. A fight folered. We captured his ship, but he sprang overboard. We wuz two hundred miles from land. Ther commander let him go, sayin' he'd drown afore he reached ther shore. We sailed arter him, an' he swum an' swum, an' ter everybody's surprise, ther next mornin' he reached the shore."

Fritz uttered a groan.

The old sailor paused and glared at him.

"Matter ouf Moses!" gasped the fat boy.

"Wot are yer groanin' fer?" growled Tim.

"Surprise."

"Over wot?"

"A man schvimmin' two hundert miles faster as a shib, in lesser as dwelf hours," replied Fritz, winking at Jack.

"Who said that, I'd like to know?"

"You dit, ouf course," replied the Dutch boy.

"Well—wot of it?"

"Oh, noddings. Go on," sighed Fritz, resignedly.

"Waal," coolly continued Tim, "whar wuz I?—yer confused me."

"Yer said dot yer vos schvimmin', und a Chinese pirate vas after yer mit a shotgun in a Japanese felucca," grinned Fritz.

"Oh, yes, so I did," innocently said Tim, actually believing that to be the situation his vivid imagination had conjured up. "Waal, I thought them sea robbers wuz a-goin' ter overhaul me, an' I dived down an' got tangled up in a vine. Thar I stayed till ther felucca had passed by an' went aroun' a islan', an' then I ariz."

"How long you vas stayed unter?"

"About two hours."

"Vot a lung you must haf!"

"Oh, I fergot ter tell yer I had on a divin' suit, and ——"

"Hold on, Tim," interposed Jack, laughingly. "You're a way off."

"How's that, my lad?" asked Tim, in surprise.

"Why, you started in with a pirate whose ship you captured, und now you've branched off on an unknown Chineese."

Thus recalled to what he had been telling originally, Tim's jaw dropped, and a guilty look crossed his rugged face.

"That 'ere Dutch lubber got me so mixed up," said he, apologetically, "that I got two incidents wot happened ter me kinder mixed up."

He did not attempt to finish his story.

On went the raft, and in the afternoon she reached the vicinage of the spot where the scuttled ship went down.

It was impossible to locate the exact place since the buoy had been sent adrift, but a fair estimate had been made of

the place, and when they filled the air reservoirs and diving and suit cylinders, the raft was submerged.

A short search for the wreck followed, and they found it.

An examination of her situation was made, and Jack saw that it would be necessary to blast away one of the two rocks between which she had been jammed.

He accordingly got out a drill, and having bored several holes in one of the rocks in the proper places, he inserted a number of cartridges in them.

An insulated copper wire joined them in a series, and the boy then brought a wire from each cartridge back to the raft and joined them to each pole of a battery.

As soon as the positive pole was connected, he touched the wire to the negative pole, and the cartridges were exploded.

The raft had been moved to a safe location behind a neighboring rock, and when the cartridges burst, the flying fragments of rent rock failed to hit her.

The water was agitated into a state of ebullition for a short time, and when it subsided Jack ventured out.

He was delighted to see that the broken rock dislodged the ship, and caused it to fall to the ground on her side.

The boy then boarded her and plugged up the holes which had been bored in the bottom, and then her doors and deadlights were closed, and water-tight tarpaulins were fastened over the hatches.

Hose were run into her and attached to the pumps.

Most of the water was forced out of her in this manner.

The raft was then lifted over, and slings were passed under the ship and fastened to the stanchions on the raft.

Jack next emptied the ballast out of the Kingfisher, and starting the upright screws revolving, the raft slowly arose, lifting the wreck with her, until she reached the surface.

The Blue Bird yet remained submerged.

A line was made fast to the ship's bow and stern, and was carried up to the drum-wheel on the stern of the raft.

The wheel was belted to the engine, and the rope wound in, each revolution hoisting up the wreck till her masts and deck were above the sea.

As soon as this was accomplished the pump hose was run into her and operated again, when the rest of the water was forced out of her and she raised inch by inch.

In a short time she floated upon the surface, not much the worse for having been buried in twenty fathoms of water, save for some broken rigging, and other slight damage.

The young inventor then boarded her, and having made assurance of her floating dorbly sure, he rove a towering hawser from her bow to the stern of the raft.

The slings, guys, and hoisting ropes were then taken off, and the Kingfisher started away with her in tow, heading for the island in the gloom of the night.

CHAPTER XIV.

ROBBED OF A MILLION.

THE sky was studded with stars when the raft finally ran in the lagoon, towing the Blue Bird astern, and came to anchor.

Our friends had a good supper and a rest, after which Jack and Fritz went out, without their diving-suits on, armed in case of need, and lowered the skiff from the stern davits.

The Kingfisher had anchored about fifty yards from the mouth of the water cavern, and our friends left her, taking a lantern, and Jack rowed to the cavern.

"Is there any sign of David Dixon's skiff?" asked the boy.

"I vos been lookin' mineselluf aroundt," replied Fritz.

"but I don't vos seen nodings ouf her, or some of her crewe alretty."

"Very likely they've left the lagoon then," said Jack.

"So much de besser," replied Fritz. "Now ve don't got some more drubbles mit dem ven de golt ve vos to-ken aboard ouf de rafts."

"That's so. Is there any exit or entrance to the cave excepting this opering on the water side?" queried the boy.

"I don't tink me so," replied Fritz, shaking his head dubiously, "'cause me und Dim vos oxamined dot blaces so much as ve could, und don't could seen no odder vay dot ve couldt got in, oxeibt dot endrances vot is by der lagoons."

"Here we are at the opening now. Get out."

The fat boy took the painter, leaped ashore, and securing it to a jutting rock, he held the gunwale of the boat while the young inventor came ashore in the cavern entrance.

Then they plunged inside.

Not a soul was in the place.

A deathly stillness prevailed.

With a deep sense of relief, as they half expected to find some one in the cavern, Jack turned to Fritz and whispered:

"So far—so good, but as there might be some one lurking in any of those fissures in the wall, who could see us removing the gold and might interfere, we'd better see if we are safe."

"D'yer mean ter oxblore dem holes?"

"Yes. I won't touch the gold until I am sure those rascals are not here to observe our actions. Go ahead."

They separated and began their task.

No one was found, however, and when they reached the last opening Fritz pointed at it and said:

"Dere vos de blace vot dot looneydicks vos in."

"Let's arouse the poor wretch and rescue him," replied Jack.

The Dutch boy led the way into the passage and they soon reached the hole in the floor without encountering any one.

To their surprise they found a tree trunk lying across the chasm, and Fritz exclaimed, in excited tones:

"*Donner vetter!* Shack, some vun vos been here."

"Is that so? How do you know?" asked the boy.

"Don'd yer see dot dree drunk?"

"Yes—what of it?"

"It ditn'd vos here before."

"Then the man must have been taken away."

"Ach, dot must be de vay id vos, as I don'd heard him."

"Depend upon it then that the crew of the row-boat which came ashore from the Bull-Dog have been here and rescued him."

"Oxactly. But to been sure, I go me ower dere."

Fritz took the lantern and clambering across on the tree he reached the other side and passed along the fissure.

It was, he found, only a continuation of the passage they were in, ending abruptly at a stone wall.

The mysterious prisoner had vanished.

It became very evident to the Dutch boy then that the people who had been there had taken him away.

But what had they done with him?

Was he dead or alive?

These questions troubled Fritz's mind considerably.

"Der brisoner vos gone!" he shouted, as he returned.

"I thought as much," said Jack. "Come back again."

The Dutch boy clambered out on the tree trunk upon his hands and feet, slowly making his way back to Jack.

He had just reached the middle of the log when it turned over under his weight and Fritz fell over.

A yell of horror pealed from his lips.

The lantern fell from his hand.

Down it fell into the hole—down, down, down.

Then the light suddenly was extinguished.

A thick gloom settled over everything in the passage.

"Fritz!" shrieked Jack, thinking his friend was lost.

The Dutch boy had made a frantic grab for the tree trunk as it turned around, and he felt himself falling.

His hands encountered the stump of a limb, and he clutched it tightly and saved himself from going down.

There he hung, under the tree trunk, over the dark abyss in the gloom, the sudden shock of his body going down making the stump crack and snap ominously.

Fritz's body swayed back and forth a few moments, and as soon as he had found that he had checked his fall, he yelled:

"Shack! Shack! Safe me vone!"

"Where are you?" cried the young inventor, in eager tones, for he was thrilled to find that the fat boy was yet alive.

"Hangin' by der log," answered Fritz.

"Hold on, and I'll come out to your assistance."

"Shiminey! Hurry! Dot pranch vos preakin'!"

In the darkness Jack heard the harsh cracking of the stump as it began to gradually give way beneath the boy's weight, and he hurriedly made his way out toward him.

Eager as he was, he could only go slow in the gloom as the tree trunk kept moving, threatening to throw him over too.

Guided by the puffing and panting of Fritz, he soon reached the middle of the log, and asked breathlessly:

"Where are you, Fritz?"

"Yust below you," came the reply.

Jack got astride of the log and reached over.

"*Mein Gott*—burry!" shrieked Fritz. "De pranch is——"

Crash!

It had given way.

The fat boy fell.

Jack could not see him in the darkness.

But he groped around and caught his wrist.

The shock nearly pulled Jack from his perch, but he hung on like grim death, and then caught Fritz with his other hand too.

The Dutch boy now hung by one arm, which Jack gripped, and there was an awful depth yawning below.

Death stared him in the face.

"Fritz!"

"Yah!"

"Keep cool."

"I dry to, Shack."

"Get hold of my arm with the other hand."

"All right. Vot next?"

"Can you haul yourself up?"

"Mein strangth most all vos gone."

"I can't lift you in this position."

"Vell, I do me mine pest."

"Ready?"

"Yah!"

"Come!"

Up swung Fritz, he managed to get a grip on the tree trunk, and Jack caught him under the arms, and gave him a hoist which brought his chest up to the log.

The rest was easy.

Pulled along by Jack, and struggling with all his might, he finally got astride of the tree trunk, where Jack held him.

It took Fritz some time to regain his breath and strength, but when he did, both he and Jack slowly and carefully edged their way back to solid ground and left the log.

"Safe—safe at last!" muttered the young inventor.

"Py shiminey Christmas, I t'ought dot I vas a det man."

"What are we going to do without a lantern?"

"I got some matches. Ve look at der golt, und if id been all right, I go back by der rafts und got anodder landerns."

"All right, come on, and look out you don't stumble."

They groped their way back into the cavern, and Fritz drew a box of matches from his pocket and lit one.

As the tiny light flamed up, he glanced around, and locating the place where the golden bars had been deposited, he hurried over to it, followed by Jack.

A pile of stones lay scattered on the floor in front of the opening—the aperture was empty, and the gold was gone.

With a cry of bitter regret, Fritz fell upon his knees in front of the aperture, and held up the match.

"Oh, holy chee—ve vas robbed!" he yelled.

"What's that?" cried Jack, with a suddenstart.

"Some vun hooked der golt!"

"Great heavens!"

"See—see! Dot blace vas embdy!"

A groan of intense disappointment escaped Jack, for it was a severe blow after all the trouble he had been put to.

"Who could have done this?" he asked in distressed tones.
 "Who? Who but dot son-of-a-sea-gooks, Dave Dixon."
 "How could they have discovered the hiding-place?"
 "Only by oxidends, I bed you."
 "Well, we have got one satisfaction."
 "Vot you means by dot, Shack?"
 "The gold is yet upon the island."
 "Dot vos so," assented Fritz, soberly.
 "They can't get it away from here yet."
 "No, und dere vos only a handful ouf mens."
 "Evidently they have hidden it somewhere."
 "Mebbe ve could found dot oudt alretty."
 "Perhaps. At any rate, we must wrest it from them."
 "I tink so neider, vhen ve know vhere dot iss."
 "Let's return to Tim, and tell him the bad news."

The match had burned out and they started for the exit, when suddenly they saw the Kingfisher's search-light streak into the opening, and heard Tim's voice yelling out on the lagoon:

"Look out! Look out for Dixon's men, Jack!"

"Danger!" gasped the boy, grasping Fritz's arm and recoiling.

"Here coom somepody!" hissed the Dutch boy.

They both drew their revolvers and fastened their eyes upon the entrance to the cavern, in which they saw the lights of several lanterns flash.

Voices of men and footfalls reached their ears.

And the next moment David Dixon, followed by six of his men, rushed into the cavern, bearing the lights they had seen and carrying revolvers in their hands.

"There they are!" shouted the ship-owner, savagely.

"Stand back, as you value your lives!" cried Jack, as he and Fritz leveled their pistols at the men.

"Go for them! Shoot them down!" roared Dixon.

With a shout the gang rushed toward Jack and Fritz, and the next moment the two boys opened fire upon their enemies and were shot at in return.

CHAPTER XV.

BOUND TO THE STAKES.

"CAPTURED!"

It was Jack who uttered this exclamation.

He was chagrined beyond measure too, for David Dixon and his companions had been wounded by the shots Jack and Fritz fired at them, yet they did not pause till they reached the boys.

Seven against two were too great odds for our friends to contend with, and they were overpowered, disarmed and bound hand and foot.

Neither of them were hit by their enemies' bullets, although a hail of leaden pellets had been whistling around them, while Dixon's men, on the contrary, had all been wounded.

Not one escaped injury more or less serious, and their rage at the two plucky boys was proportioned by the extent of their individual wounds.

Indeed, so wrathful were they, that as soon as the two were rendered helpless, with muttered threats of violence they made a sudden rush for the captives, and would perhaps have murdered them had not Dixon interfered.

"No, no! Not yet, boys!" he cried, ringingly, as he sprang between the men and his captives and held up his hand.

"See what they've done to us!" shouted one of the men.
 "You shall have your revenge in good season."

"But we want it now!"

"Ay, ay—now!" roared the rest, furiously.

"Listen! Don't be fools! Don't hurt your own interests."

"How can we?" was the sullen rejoinder.

"By keeping these two alive, and using them as shields against the fire of the sailor on the wrecking raft, we can get away to shore in the skiff! Without such protection he would blow us into eternity with the guns on his deck."

The men saw the force of this argument, for they had ob-

served Tim loading one of the pneumatic guns to fire at them when they emerged from the cavern.

They retreated after a moment's thought, muttering dire threats against the two plucky boys, and attended to their wounds.

One of them went to the entrance of the cavern and kept a watch upon the movements of Tim on the raft.

He came in presently and said:

"Ther sailor's sendin' his craft over here."

"Perdition! He is nervy!" gasped Dixon, turning pale.

"S'pose he's up ter some mischief, hey?"

"Yes; we must act quick."

"What kin we do?"

"Carry the prisoners to the entrance."

This was done, and Tim saw his friends in the glow of the search light.

Dixon pressed the muzzle of a revolver against the boy's head.

"Veer off there!" he yelled. "If yer don't I'll blow Wright's brains out!"

"What'll I do, Jack?" shouted Tim from the raft.

"Obey this scoundrel until you can get the best of him."

"All right, my lad; I'll save yer yet——"

"Hark you!" interposed Dixon, harshly.

"Well, what d'yer want, yer lubber?"

"We are going to enter our skiff with the prisoners and row around to land. If you fire upon us your friends perish."

"Cuss yer ugly mug! If I had yer alone——"

"Do you intend to deliberately murder your own friends?"

"No, gosh! blame yer."

"Then leave the lagoon."

"I'll be hanged if I will!"

"Do as he says, Tim!" cried Jack.

He saw that any obstinacy upon Tim's part would only jeopardize his own life without doing him any good.

The old sailor was satisfied with anything Jack said.

"Werry good, my lad," he replied. "I'll obey your orders."

And so saying, he steered the raft away.

As soon as the raft had left the lagoon with the wreck in tow Dixon turned to his men and said hastily:

"Now, boys, into the boat and away with you before he can play any tricks upon us! Put the prisoners in!"

Jack and Fritz were thrown into the skiff, and when all hands got in they pulled across the lagoon.

Landing where the shrubbery grew densest along the shore, they hauled the boat out and hid it in the bushes.

They had it concealed there before, and for that reason none of our friends had seen it when entering the lagoon.

Carrying Jack and Fritz into the woods, they proceeded inland until they came to an old abandoned fisherman's hut which stood beside a spring in an open glade.

Here the prisoners were flung in a corner, a watch was posted, and several of them fell asleep on the floor.

Fritz and Jack did not let their position trouble them much, for they soon fell fast asleep, too.

On the following morning they were awakened by hearing the marooned crew moving about, and arousing themselves, they saw that all hands were awake.

One of them had captured some shell-fish, and another had brought in some half-ripe apples from a tree in the woods, from which frugal supply they made a meal, as they had no food when they came ashore.

"You can watch us eat, but you can have none," said Dixon, sneeringly, as he saw the two boys watching them.

"Yon design to starve us, as you did the man in the cave, I see," replied the boy, pointedly.

"What! Did you see him?" asked Dixon, with a start.

"He was the fellow who saw the scuttled ship go down, and was repaid for telling you about it by being half killed."

"That's my business!" growled Dixon. "I see you've raised the wreck. But, luckily for us, one of my men chanced to find the hiding-place of the gold, and we've got

it so safely hidden now that you'll never lay eyes on it again."

"You are mistaken," calmly replied Jack. "I've got a feeling that I'll regain it from you sooner or later."

"Bah! You know why I've risked so much in this game."

"Do you suppose I'd give up now that I've got the stuff?"

"Oh, you can't get it away from here anyway."

"Perhaps not on the schooner, since you contrived to get her away from here, abandoning us. But once we reach the main we can easily get a ship if we fail to get the Blue Bird in our possession."

"So you've got your eye on her, eh?"

"I believe I'm half owner of her. What fools you were to keep a lantern blazing in your boat when you entered the cave last night. If we hadn't seen it you might not have been captured. You can't escape us now as you did on the schooner. The wonder to me is that you didn't kill yourself when you took that leap overboard into twenty fathoms of water."

"David Dixon, you have made an outlaw of yourself!"

"No one knows it better than I do."

"What was it done for—merely this gold?"

"Nothing else."

"Who was the man you had imprisoned in the cavern?"

"That I shall never tell you."

"Where is he now?"

"At large on this island somewhere."

"Did you liberate him?"

"We went to take him from the cavern and he escaped."

"Beware, then, for your cruelty to him will lead him to kill you the first chance he gets."

"I shall shoot him down like a dog on sight."

The men went out at this juncture, and Dixon followed them, leaving the two captives lying upon the floor conversing.

The day passed away and night fell.

Hunger and thirst assailed the two boys, and they knew were useless to ask for food, so they said nothing.

Outside the wind rose to a gale, they heard the trees rustling, and rain began to patter down upon the roof of the hut.

A dreary night set in.

With a moody expression upon his face, David Dixon entered the hut and sat down upon a bench, where he remained for some time with his face buried in his hands thinking.

He had not been there long, however, when there sounded the hurried patter of footsteps outside approaching.

A man rushed in.

"Hey, Dixon!" he shouted.

"Well?" asked the ship-owner, starting up.

"The Blue Bird is ours!"

"What? Have you captured her?"

"Five minutes ago down in the cove."

"That's a lucky stroke! How did you do it?"

"Some one saw the raft there with her. We were posted and swam out to her, got aboard, and cut the hawser. The man on the raft was furious. He wanted to use his guns on us but we drove him into his pilot-house with our pistols. He started the raft off, and she ran on a hidden mud flat. There she stuck, and she won't get off till the tide rises in two hours."

"And the ship—what have you done with her?" eagerly asked the ship-owner, as he sprang to his feet.

"Got what few sails up that she has left, and sailed her upon the sea, ran down the coast and I came ashore for you."

"Good! Where have you got her now?"

"Hauled to near where the gold is buried."

"Well, put the metal aboard of her and sail right off."

"Excellent, sir. But how about the prisoners?"

"Didn't they wound you?"

"Badly, sir."

"You want vengeance upon them?"

"All hands do," the man answered.

"You shall have it—now. Help me to get these two down to the shore, and you shall see what their fate will be."

They cut the leg bonds of their prisoners and made them walk down to the beach, off which there was a sand bar.

The ship was between the land and the bar, and there was a row-boat drawn up on the shore.

Procuring two saplings, the rascals took them and their prisoners into the skiff and rowed out to the bar.

Here Dixon disembarked with his companion, and took Jack and Fritz ashore with them.

The two saplings were planted in the sand, and the two prisoners were securely bound to them.

Every one upon the Blue Bird was watching them.

"We are going to leave you here," said Dixon, cold bloodedly. "And when the tide rises, it will cover your heads and drown you!"

"You are a fiend!" exclaimed Jack, vehemently.

"No, I am simply considering my own safety. With you two out of the way, my men's revenge will be complete, and I will be well rid of a pair of human beings whom I feared and hated."

Leaving the two boys, the rascals entered the boat and rowed away.

In the dim light Jack saw them carry the gold from the island to the ship in their boat, and when it was all stowed away on board, the sails were raised and the Blue Bird sailed away.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LOSS OF THE KINGFISHER.

UPON finding that his friends had fallen into the hands of the enemy, and having been ordered to vacate the lagoon, Tim had driven the raft out upon the sea, towing the Blue Bird.

He made a circuit of the island, and when day dawned, he ran the raft into a cove where he remained, waiting for the following night to fall, so that he could go ashore under cover of the darkness and try to help his friends.

Unfortunately the sailors had discovered him, and got away with the ship, as the man described to Dixon, and Tim found the Kingfisher had run aground.

There was no getting her afloat until the tide rose, and the old sailor became furious over his helplessness.

"Blast 'em, they've got a ship ter git away in now," he grumbled, "an' that means good-bye ter our hopes, 'cause they'll carry Jack an' Fritz off in her now."

Had he known that they also had the treasure, his anger would have been very much intensified.

In the midst of Tim's misery, Bismark hopped into the pilot-house, spread his wings, and growled:

"Get off the earth! -Ho, ho, ho!"

"Oh, thar's poor ole Fritz's pet," softly said Tim.

"Come off," replied Bismark, with a chuckle.

"Yer son of a gun, I'll break yer neck if yer gits sassy ter me," growled Tim, getting mad at the bird.

The parrot croaked, spread his wings, and flew up on the seat of a chair, where Whiskers lay curled up fast asleep.

As soon as the bird saw the monkey, it uttered a shriek like a rusty steam whistle, and caught him by the ear with its beak, inflicting a most painful pinch.

Whiskers flew up in the air like a rubber ball.

He howled and chattered, and catching the parrot by the neck he almost strangled the life out of it, and then hauled off with his paw and began to cuff it vigorously.

"Go fer him, Whiskers," chuckled Tim, sitting down with a grin on his face to enjoy the fight. "Soak ther hook-nosed lubber in the ear. Gol darn ye, don't yer 'low no common parrot like him ter chaw yer hearin' tackle off."

Thus encouraged, the monkey made the parrot's feathers fly in all directions, and Bismark screamed, flapped his wings, and made the most desperate efforts to get away.

In this he finally succeeded.

As if realizing that Tim was encouraging the monkey to

attack him, the parrot suddenly flew up in the air and gave Tim a dig on the nose with its claw that wrung a yell of agony from him.

"Thunder! Ther blamed thing has killed me!" roared Tim, as he clapped his paw to his bugle, and hopped backward.

Whiskers dodged under a table, and Bismark, apparently satisfied with what it had done, flew out of the room.

Tim was furious at the bird, and swore he would wring its neck the first time he got hold of it.

Bismark was a discreet bird, however.

It took care to keep out of the old sailor's way.

The tide came up finally, and set the raft afloat, the rain pattered down, a dense gloom settled over the sea, and Tim having had his supper, drove the Kingfisher out on the sea.

A moaning sound came from the waves, and the wind sighed over the raft as Tim drove it down the coast.

He was intent upon finding the stolen ship.

Turning on the search-light, the old fellow flashed it along the shore every few minutes, and then upon the sea.

During one of these operations the breeze bore the sound of a human voice to his ears, and he listened intently.

"Help! Help!" was the cry he heard.

"Tim! Tim!" came another voice.

"Gosh a'mighty!" muttered Tim. "I'm a lubber if that ain't Jack an' Fritz yellin' ter me ter save 'em!"

The voices died away, but a few moments later were repeated, and the old sailor realized that they were borne to him on the wind against which the raft was running.

He accordingly drove the Kingfisher ahead, and presently saw a white gleaming patch on the water, which indicated a shoal, and steered his craft aside to avoid it.

As he did so a gurgling cry reached his ears again, much plainer this time, and he peered ahead keenly.

Upon the surface, in the middle of the patch, he saw two round, dark objects.

They were human heads.

A second glance showed who owned them.

With a cry of alarm Tim drove the raft over to his friends.

Bound to the stakes, they had been held down in the sea, and the rising tide had gradually begun to cover them, until now it was up to their chins, and the waves were breaking over them every few moments.

Up to Jack and Fritz the old sailor steered the raft, seeing plainly that if he had come quarter of an hour later the two would have been submerged and drowned.

As soon as the raft reached them Tim stopped it.

He grasped a knife, hobbled out on deck, and shouted:

"Are ye bound?"

"Tied to stakes driven in a sand bar," answered Jack.

"Hold hard, my lad, an' I'll soon ha' ye up here."

"Shimminey! Why don't yer hurry?" shouted Fritz, as a big wave suddenly burst up over him.

Without the least hesitation the old sailor dropped overboard, and dove down beside Jack, and cut him from the stake.

He had to come up for breath.

The raft drifted away with the wind, but Tim paid no heed to it, but dove under again and cut the boy's lashings.

In a moment more Jack was free.

Then they both went over to Fritz and liberated him.

By that time the raft was one hundred yards away and still receding much faster than she should have gone.

Every one was surprised, and glancing over at her they saw that her screws were revolving furiously now.

The reason was plain to be seen.

Whiskers had done it.

Chased by the parrot he sprang upon one of the levers.

It happened to be the one that started the screws, and the raft was started off with no one to guide her.

Our friends saw the monkey in the brilliantly lighted pilot-house perched upon the lever, and understood what caused the raft to recede so swiftly from them.

The three swimmers struck out for the raft, fearing that

she would run away to sea and leave them behind struggling in the water for their lives.

It was useless to chase the raft, as they soon found out, for it swiftly distanced them and sped away.

"Gone!" gasped Jack, despairingly.

"Ay, lad, an' all on account o' that 'ere monkey," groaned Tim.

"Ve pedder got back to der island," gasped Fritz.

This suggestion was acted upon.

The water was becoming rougher every moment, and they found it very difficult to swim in it, but kept on steadily, and after a hard struggle reached the island.

Here they landed half exhausted from their struggles and flung themselves down upon the sand.

The lights of the raft had disappeared in the gloom, and a feeling of hopeless dismay took possession of the trio.

They gave each other an account of what they had gone through, and then hunted up the lone hut in which they were confined.

There they passed the night, taking turns sleeping.

With the dawn of the next day they aroused themselves and found that the storm had ceased, but a leaden hue hung over the sky and a mist covered the sea.

"No food, and cast away upon this lonely island, our boat gone, and our enemies in possession of the ship and gold," said Jack, "we've got a mighty dreary outlook ahead of us."

"Let's make a tour of ther islan'," suggested Tim. "We may see some passin' craft, an' git carried away from here."

"Ach, vhy ve don't vas got somedings to eat?" mournfully asked Fritz. "Me und Shack didn'd vas had our meals in two days."

They started off, however, trusting to luck to pick up some shell-fish along the shore, Jack and Tim going in one direction, and Fritz going alone in the other.

It was a fairly large island, and the beach was strewn with debris cast up by the waves, while the storm of the night before had left a heavy surf roaring like lions.

Fritz picked up several clams, cracked them open, and eagerly devoured them, as he was very hungry.

He filled his pockets with them as he went along, as he feared that his friends might get none, and meant to save them for Jack and Tim.

The Dutch boy got half way around the island in this manner, and finally came to a jutting strip of land composed of granite bluffs that ran far out into the sea.

He had to make a detour by going out around the base of these bluffs to follow the shore.

He skirted the rocks, and finally made his way out to the extreme end of the projection, when a sudden yell burst from his lips, and he rushed around the rocks like a madman.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN THE FOG BANKS.

JACK and the sailor had no trouble in securing a frugal breakfast along the beach of the food cast up by the sea.

They both felt very disconsolate over the loss of the raft.

"Misfortunes never come singly, Tim," said the young inventor, "but it won't do for us to give way to despair. We have been in worse situations than this before, and must brace up. Our enemies have triumphed over us, it is true, but I feel confident that we will even matters up with them—"

"Hush! Down—down behind ther rocks!" interposed Tim, excitedly, as he suddenly paused and pulled the boy down to the ground in back of a big boulder.

"Why—what's the matter now?" questioned Jack.

"Speak o' ther devil, an' he's sure to appear."

"I do not understand you, Tim."

"Then cast yer weather eye ont on ther sea."

The boy peered around the rock, and there, just emerging from the dense fog-banks floating over the water, he saw the Blue Bird gliding along the shore, with David Dixon stand-

ing in the bow, one of the rascal's men at the wheel and the rest working the few sails they had raised.

"By Jove, why are they haunting this island?" asked the boy.

"I reckon as they're either lookin' fer ther raft, or fer us."

"She is going to the northward, Tim."

"Skirtin' ther islan', my lad."

"It looks so, and—hello—what's that?"

Beyond the ship there was a dark, moving object close to the water, and Tim eyed it closely.

It kept moving slowly along, and gradually kept getting plainer and plainer, until at last it appeared.

"It's the wrecking raft!" cried Jack, in surprise.

"Ay, an' some un's in ther pilot-house a-steerin' her."

"The crew of the Blue Bird see it now."

"An' ther lubbers is a-runnin' away."

"By jingo, Tim, it is Fritz on the raft!"

And so it was.

There stood the fat boy steering the Kingfisher along, yelling at the crew of the ship to haul to.

When he rounded the promontory, Fritz had seen the raft lying broadside to on the shore, where she had run of her own accord, and boarding her, he steered her out of the shoals into deep water, and shut off the electric lights.

He then ran her around the island, keeping a watch upon the shore for his friends, when he saw the Blue Bird.

Fritz was so angry at the crew upon the ship he was going to give chase to them when he heard Jack yell:

"Raft ahoy!"

"Hallo dere!" replied Fritz.

"Take us aboard."

"Where yer vos?"

Tim and Jack emerged from behind the rock.

As soon as Fritz saw them, he steered in for the shore.

On went the Blue Bird, her crew seeing the three friends and knowing that their designs had failed, and she was swallowed up in the fog, where she melted from their sight.

Jack and Tim hurried down to the shore, ran out into the sand and met the raft, aboard of which they hastily clambered.

"Where did you get her?" joyfully asked the boy when they got inside, and the Dutch boy told them.

"Dit yer see dot Blue Bird?" he asked, in conclusion.

"Ay, now, an' she were a-headin' fer ther north-west."

"You had better take the wheel and try to find her, Tim, while Fritz and I change our clothes and get something to eat."

"It'll be like huntin' fer a needle in a haystack ter find that craft in this fog," said the old sailor, "but I'll try."

He took charge of the wheel, and Jack and the fat boy made a hurried examination of the raft and found that she had not sustained any injury.

They then secured the monkey and parrot in their cages so they could commit no more mischief, and changing their attire they secured some food.

Fritz then went down to the dynamo to refill the batteries as their supply of electricity was running low, and Jack returned to the pilot-house and relieved Tim of the wheel so he could go and get his breakfast.

The fog grew denser every moment, and Jack turned on the search-light, which cut through it some distance like a knife, giving him a better view ahead than he had before.

He had not the remotest idea where to look for the ship, and knew very well that his enemies would try to double on him in the fog and leave the neighborhood of the island.

"I can only beat about at random," he thought, angrily, as he put on a full head of power. "If we meet, it will only be by chance. Confound these fog banks! These seas are continually veiled in them. Ah, here's Tim!"

The old sailor came in with a sandwich in his hand.

"Any trace o' 'em yet?" he asked, munching away at the food.

"No, and I'm afraid we won't be able to do anything till the fog lifts."

"By that time they'll be far away from this 'ere place."

"That's what worries me."

"Hark! Wot's that?"

They both listened.

It sounded like a pounding noise.

A moment afterwards an immense black object glided out of the fog like a ghost directly ahead of them.

"A steamer!" cried Jack. "She's running us down!"

He spun the wheel around.

The hoarse, smothered tones of a whistle pealed out, and the Kingfisher changed her course to the starboard.

Away she rushed, and the steamer towered up over her.

There came a violent shock as the run of the steamer struck the stern of the raft, and the watch on the steamer yelled:

"Hard-a-port!"

"P-o-r-t!" came the quartermaster's voice.

"Raft on the port quarter!"

"Is she clear?"

"Struck!"

"Injured?"

"No!"

"Give away there!"

"Raft ahoy!"

"Ahoy!" replied Jack.

"Are you all right?"

"No damage done."

"Don't need any help?"

"No. We just about missed your bows. Did you pass a ship?"

"Yes. Hailed the Blue Bird, a mile or more astern."

The Kingfisher was all right, and the steamer went on.

She rapidly faded away in the fog, and the raft went ahead, described a curve and ran back on the steamer's course.

"The Blue Bird is running southward!" cried Jack. "I am glad we met that steamer. They have put us on the track of the ship. I think she's heading for Boston."

"Ther collision made a dent, but nuthin' ain't broke," said Tim, who had gone out to ascertain the extent of the damage.

Fritz came up to learn the cause of the shock, and they told him what had happened to them.

"It's lucky we had the search-light," said Jack, "for it showed me the steamer before she reached us, and gave me a chance to get out of the way ere she run us down."

Tim studied the compass a few minutes, and then said:

"Ther steamer wuz a-headin' north-east. Ter foller her course back we must head due south-west. I reckon as that'll fetch us somewhere nigh ther Blue Bird."

"She didn't vos got much ganvas oop neider," added Fritz, thoughtfully, "und dot makes her go slow. Ve go near as dwice as quick, und puddy soon ve oughter catch her alretty."

"True," assented Jack, "for when the ship was scuttled, a good deal of her rigging was broken in her descent, and it probably suffered during the storm, when we pursued her. She must work under reduced canvas, boys."

"If she don't make one o' ther ports whar we wouldn't be likely ter look fer her," said Tim, "we'll owerhaul her in no time. But she'll have ter go ter some big city, I'm thinkin'. If Dixon's lay is ter sell that 'ere gold, he can't do it in no small place, but in some city like Boston."

"He won't sell it here at all, I'm positive," said Jack. "He is too cagy to get caught napping. So much gold would excite suspicion. He will only put into port to rig his ship, get more men, and then head for some foreign country."

This seemed plausible to the rest.

Several hours passed by, and as the day advanced, the fog began to lift and the sea became clearer.

By noontime the fog was left astern and lights were put out.

The course of the raft had brought her straight toward Cape Cod, off which there was an immense fleet of fishing boats.

Jack viewed them through his glass.

When he lowered it he pointed off to the southward.

"If that distant ship isn't the Blue Bird, I am very much mistaken, boys!" he exclaimed. "You'd better pursue her anyway."

Tim and Fritz examined the craft and agreed with him.

Accordingly the Kingfisher was steered after the suspected vessel.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DRIVEN ASHORE.

"BLUE BIRD ahoy!"

"Ahoy, Kingfisher!"

"Haul to—I want that craft!"

"You cannot have her, Jack Wright!"

"Since you refuse, I will resort to violence."

"Proceed, my good fellow. You will gain nothing by it."

This dialogue occurred between Jack and Dixon a few hours later, for the raft had overhauled the suspected ship, when our friends saw that she was really the vessel they were after.

Jack was on the forward deck, and Dixon at the bulwarks aft.

"I'd like to take that craft without destroying her!" the boy exclaimed, regretfully, "but I'll conquer those scoundrels if I have to blow her to pieces!"

"Be keerful thar, Jack, they're aimin' thar pistols at ye, lad," said Tim, as he stood at the wheel in the pilot-house.

These words had scarcely left his lips when several shots were fired at the young inventor by the men on the deck of the Blue Bird, and a veritable hail of bullets flew around the boy.

One of them cut his shoulder, another carried off his hat, and a third one went so close to his neck as to burn it.

The boy laughed.

"What miserable shots at short range!" he muttered.

He did not expose himself any longer, however, but went inside, closed the door, and said to Tim:

"They are still defiant. They know that submission is fatal to them, and they will resist to the last drop of their blood."

"One shot with one o' ther guns will fetch 'em to their senses."

"But we may destroy the ship."

"*Donner und blitzen!* Here coom der Pull-Tog!" interposed Fritz just then, coming in from the machine cage aft, where he had been examining the electric machine there.

"Where is she?" queried Jack, in startled tones.

"By der stern; she yust come oud from that landt."

The boy looked back and saw the schooner booming on under full sail, not half a league away, and bearing down on them.

She had a new rudder rigged and had been following them.

"They probably know by this time that their friends are in possession of the Blue Bird," said Jack, "and design to assist them if they can."

"Then thar's two on 'em fer us ter tackle!"

Boom! interrupted a loud report astern of them, and Tim drove the raft around, and a shot from a gun on the deck of the oncoming schooner struck the raft.

It struck the deck on the port side, broke one of the stanchions, tore away two of the upright screws and passed overboard.

"They must have bought a new gun!" exclaimed Jack, "for the brass signal gun they had before could not do that."

Fritz went out to examine the damage.

His report was aggravating to Jack, and he procured several cartridges from his supply of ammunition.

"It seems that our pneumatic guns are going to be useful as well as ornamental," he muttered, as he went outside.

On came the schooner, and the boy loaded the guns.

He gave some directions to Tim, and the old sailor managed the raft until it was in a favorable position.

Then Jack aimed one of the guns at the schooner.

He was an expert gunner, the vessel was now not quite a mile away, and he fired the shot.

Away sped the whistling projectile across the sea, and described a curve in the air and struck the schooner.

There followed a terrific explosion at the base of the foremast, and the stick was shattered and went by the board, tearing the rigging and carrying it with it.

A shout of dismay pealed from the crew of the schooner, and they began to cut away the wreckage.

The Bull-Dog ran up into the wind, her crew utterly demoralized, and Jack grimly aimed the other gun at her.

Away went the projectile.

It was aimed true for its mark.

Striking the mainmast it tore it to pieces.

The boy had fairly dismantled the schooner, and he loaded up the gun again and fired a third shot at her hull.

Success again crowned the boy's efforts, for the explosion of the projectile took place at the bow, tearing away the bowsprit and ripping open the planks, letting in the sea.

The schooner now began to founder.

Jack saw that her destruction was complete.

Every one of the crew were rushing about the decks in the wildest confusion, launching the boats, putting on life-preservers, and doing everything they could to save themselves.

"Head for the schooner, Tim!" cried the boy.

"Ay, ay, my hearty," replied the sailor, complying.

Away dashed the raft toward the sinking vessel, and she came within a cable's length of her just as the crew put out in the boats and began to row away.

They had not gone ten yards from her when she sunk.

"Ahoy, you rascals, come about!" cried Jack.

"You let us be!" cried the captain.

"Haul to, or I'll fire upon you!"

"No! No! Don't do that!"

"Will you obey me or not?"

"Yes. We will do as you say, only don't fire!"

"Then come alongside and submit to arrest!"

In terror lest the boy might discharge one of those terrible guns at them, the twelve men rowed over to the raft.

Jack called to Fritz to prepare the water chamber for their reception, and when the two boats reached the raft he shouted:

"Now, come aboard in single file and march into that doorway. If you betray the least sign of treachery until we have got you locked up, you will perish, as I am getting sick and tired of your rascality!"

The boy kept the pneumatic gun aimed toward the men, and Fritz marshaled them into the room he prepared for their lodging.

In a comparatively short space of time the whole gang were locked up, and Fritz fastened their boats astern of the raft.

"Dot saddles id," commented the Dutch boy, in satisfied tones, as he locked them in. "Ve vos got apoud two-thirds ouf dem, und now noddin' ve got to do but go und plo' dot shibs to beezes."

"Where has the Blue Bird gone?" asked Jack.

"Vhy—mein cracious—looker dot now! While ve der rest ouf dem vos fightin', dem odder vellers deir shibs vos steered for der landt, und pud'cy gwick dey got dere before ve could reaches 'em."

He pointed off to the leeward.

During their engagement Dixon had seen that it was a gone case for his friends, as the schooner was being blown to pieces.

He therefore discreetly steered the ship for shore.

That Jack would bombard him the same way as he had the Bull-Dog he did not have the least doubt, and he then figured that his life was more valuable than the ship and cargo.

It was plain to be seen that Jack could very easily wrest from him the Blue Bird and her contents, or destroy them at long range and perhaps kill him afterward.

He therefore headed for the shore, to escape to land, preferring to abandon the ship rather than lose his life.

The ship was between Cape Cod and Cape Malabar, and they had gained a fairly long lead upon the raft.

By the time Tim started in pursuit of the ship, she was half way to the sandy shore and was heading straight for it. Nor did she deviate in the least.

Straight for the surf-beaten shore plunged the ship as fast as her few sails would carry her along.

"They are going to run her aground and escape to land!" exclaimed Jack, seeing through the project of the rascals.

"Ay, an' they've got sich a long lead on us we can't pervert it, neither," growled Tim, as he watched the ship.

"Why yer don't send a shots after dem?" asked Fritz, eagerly. "Dot vill shtop her vunct, und safe her from bein' a wreck."

"No; there's a chance of saving her without injury. I think more of saving the ship and cargo than of fighting her crew," said Jack. "Can you get up any more speed, Tim?"

"Not another volt, my lad."

"Then they'll beat us to the shore."

This was a foregone conclusion with Tim, and he kept the raft going along in the wake of the ship doggedly enough, and she rapidly overhauled the Blue Bird.

Within five minutes the ship plunged into the surf and struck.

She seemed to rebound, and then lay over upon her beam ends, and the next minute her crew went over the sides.

Down into the sea they dropped one after the other, and they all got ashore, and began to run to the southward.

Jack rushed up to his guns.

"Tim!" he shouted; "run the raft down the coast with them, and I'll bring them up with a short turn yet!"

Around swung the raft, and with her broadside to the leeward, she dashed ahead, rounding a promontory, keeping pace with the fugitives.

Jack had taken out several projectiles, and he now rapidly loaded up the two guns with them.

He then aimed the piece to bear ahead of the fugitives, and having it ready, he fired a shot.

Away screamed the projectile, and striking the ground ahead of the fugitives, it burst with a loud report.

CHAPTER XIX.

DIXON'S GANG BROKEN UP.

THERE were seven men upon the shore, including David Dixon, and they were all of the schooner's crew who had been aboard of the Blue Bird.

Jack counted them and saw that none were missing.

He watched the bursting of the projectile upon the shore.

It struck some distance ahead of the running men, and sent a cloud of sand and gravel flying up into the air that hid Dixon and his companions from sight for a few moments.

When the dust settled there was a large excavation to be seen in the ground where the projectile had burst.

The men were flying in all directions.

"Halt!" screamed Jack at the top of his voice.

None of them paid any attention to his order.

"Halt, I say, or I'll fire at you!" continued Jack, sternly.

Still no attention was paid to his order.

Exasperated, the boy let the second shot drive, and it burst in back of the men, the flying debris striking two of them, and felling them senseless to the ground.

"They won't stop!" muttered Jack, "nor will I let up on them until they obey either voluntarily or involuntarily."

He loaded the gun and glanced up.

Three of the men were now running inland, and he saw that the one in the middle was David Dixon.

The two other men had dodged behind some rocks where they disappeared from view, and Jack aimed the gun to bear upon the three runners, and fired it.

The shot struck ahead of them, and Dixon fell, stunned by a piece of the burst cylinder.

His companions paused, uttering shouts of fear, and glanced back at the boat, and then picked Dixon up between them.

There was a dense growth of timber ahead of them, and they ran toward it with their burden.

Jack ceased firing, and turning to Tim, he shouted:

"Run her in shoreward so I can get on land."

"Let me go mit you?" said Fritz, eagerly.

"Very well—get the weapons ready."

Tim steered the raft inland, and as soon as Fritz appeared with the weapons they got into one of the boats, and unfastening the painter, Fritz pulled her ashore.

Beaching the boat, the two ran upon the shore, and seeing the two wounded men they hurried over to them, tied them with a piece of marline Jack had brought, and then ran toward the woods, into which Dixon had been carried.

They were not fatally injured.

Tim had driven the raft out into deep water again, and there remained waiting for them to come back.

Leading the way, Jack soon reached the woods at the point where he had seen the men disappear.

Here he scanned the ground, and soon saw a distinct trail trampled in the scattered and wiry grass.

He pursued it with the skill of a frontiersman, and it led them a long chase of half an hour's duration.

"They had a start of about fifteen minutes ahead of us," said the boy to Fritz, and unless we run them down soon they may beat us after all, burdened as they are."

"Ach, dey don't could go so gwick like us," panted Fritz.

"No, but they are making remarkably swift time when you consider that they are burdened with Dixon's body. Fear for their lives evidently lends speed to their legs. It is very evident that the ship-owner was merely wounded. Had he been killed, or even fatally injured, it is very doubtful if they would have taken the trouble to carry him so far."

They now dashed out into a clearing.

"Dere dey are now!" panted Fritz, pointing ahead.

"Sure enough! They see us. They've dropped Dixon now."

"Shtob!" roared Fritz, aiming a pistol at the fugitives.

"Don't waste a word—fire!" cried Jack.

The boy was thoroughly incensed against the gang now.

Bang! bang! went two shots.

It was the fugitives who fired.

The bullets came singing by in dangerous proximity.

"Donner vetter! Dey near hit me!" growled Fritz.

He fired a shot the same time Jack did.

"They're gone!" muttered the young inventor, in chagrin.

The two men had gained the protection of some rocks, where they vanished, and when our friends reached the place they could see no signs of the rascals.

Suffice it that they made good their escape.

Jack and Fritz came to a pause very much out of breath.

"You vas goin' ter gif up?" queried the fat boy.

"May as well. We can never find them here," Jack answered.

"Vell, coom back und ve pick up Dixon."

"See! The villain is recovering and sitting up!"

"Dot vas so! Coom on!"

Back they ran to where Dixon was, and pouncing upon him ere he regained his shattered faculties, they tied his hands behind his back and a marline around his neck.

When he was fully revived and realized his situation, his rage knew no limit, and he raved like a maniac.

He had a trifling scalp wound on the back of his head, but otherwise seemed to be uninjured.

"Lost, lost!" he raved. "Oh, this is maddening!"

"You've reached the limit! I've foiled you in the end!" cried Jack.

"Give me a pistol and I'll fight you for my life!"

"Oh, no. You are getting entirely too reckless," replied Jack. "You began by knavery, went from bad to worse, and in your recent desperation you have not even hesitated

at absolute murder. That shows what sort of a rascal you are."

"Where are my men?" snarled the ship-owner.

"Only four of them escaped. The rest are in my power, and in less than an hour I'll have the Blue Bird and her cargo of gold too."

"By the shades of Satan, this is unbearable."

"Feel bad over it, don't you? Now get up and come back to the raft with us. I've got two more of your gang to gather in."

He assisted the man to his feet, and Fritz pulled him along by the marline around his neck, threatening to shoot him if he made the least effort to get away.

In this manner they reached the two other wounded men, and Jack got them upon their feet and bandaged their wounds.

The trio were then marched down to the shore, embarked in the boat, they pushed her through the surf, and rowed her to the Kingfisher, which Tim brought over to meet them.

When they got aboard, they put the three prisoners into the metal-lined water chamber with the rest, and joined Tim.

"Three cheers!" roared the old sailor, delightedly.

"Hurrah!" shouted Jack, Tim and Fritz.

"The victory is gained!" said the boy, delightedly.

"Did yer lose four on 'em?" queried Tim.

"That was all."

"Ve oughter been satisfied."

"Hurrah!" shrieked Bismark in his cage.

It made the three friends laugh to hear the bird mimic them, and as soon as they regained their composure Jack said:

"Now but one thing remains to be done, boys. We must run back to the Blue Bird, get her afloat again, and then home we will go as fast as possible."

"Ay, now, that's ther caper," acquiesced Tim with a nod.

He turned the raft around accordingly, and she was sent flying back to the northward again.

"Dere vos a rocky promontory ahet dere," said Fritz, "and so soon dot we bass dot ve will see de shibs."

"Ay, now," assented Tim, "it's funny how much o' the coast them 'ere promontories hides. I recollect when I wuz in ther navy, we wuz sailin' along thar coast o' Mexico, a-lookin' fer a wrecker, an' a-headin' toward one o' them promontories behind wot we'd seen him a-sailin' his schooner."

"Rats!" interposed Fritz. "Gief us a rest alretty."

"Don't yer want ter hear this yarn?" growled Tim.

"Nein! Und vot's more, I don't would let yer tell it!"

"Yer won't, hey? Waal, I'll tell it, or bust my b'iler."

"Ve see apoud dot," said Fritz, grimly, and he got his old accordeon and began to play the most doleful grind he could think of.

"Ther minnit we got aroun' ther promontory," said Tim, trying desperately hard to ignore the music, "we seen a whale rushin' at ther wrecker's ship wit' its mouth wide open—say, stop!"

"Not till yer vos bust yer b'iler," grinned Fritz, playing away.

"All right, my lad," growled Tim, doggedly continuing.

"Ther minnte ther whale's teeth struck ther wrecker, thar wuz a crash. It wuzn't ther ship. Oh, no. That wuz made o' steel. It wuz ther whale's teeth. They wuz all broke off in ther critter's gums—say, will yer stop?"

"Vait till I hear how yer got false teeth fer dot whale!"

And Fritz played away worse than ever.

Tim was in a terrible state of nervousness.

"Ther whale swallowed his teeth an' died!" he roared.

"We sailed inter ther wrecker, an' ketched him, an'—say, blast yer ugly mug, stop that music, will yer, or I'll have a fit!"

A startled exclamation interrupted the roar of laughter Fritz let out, for they had just rounded the jutting strip of land.

"By Jove, boys, the Blue Bird is afloat again, and she is sailing away up the coast with a man at her wheel!"

Tim and Fritz saw that Jack had told the truth.

CHAPTER XX.

CONCLUSION.

THE Blue Bird was then about two miles away from the raft, and had up her jib and mainsail, with a free wind.

She was bowling along up the coast at the rate of about eight knots an hour, and the raft went flying after her at full speed.

Jack was astonished to see the man upon her deck.

"There were only seven men in Dixon's party," said he to his friends, "and every one of them went ashore, for I saw them."

"Likely as not," replied Tim, "that this 'ere lubber wuz on shore, an' seein' ther ship a-lyin' there abandoned wen' aboard o' her."

"Fer sure," assented Fritz. "I tink so neider. Und as dot tides vas risin' when der shib vented ashore, it must haf lifted her off und dot feller vas sailin' her away to keep her for hisseluf."

"We can easily find out the particulars when we overtake him," said Jack. "We are makin' nearly two miles to her one so that within an hour we ought to overtake her."

The raft rapidly crept up to the ship, and her strange helmsman kept her going steadily ahead, never looking back once, as all his attention was needed for her wheel & sails.

Half an hour passed by.

In that time the distance between the two vessels was shortened by half, and they gained a better look at him.

He wore a sailor suit and cap.

This was as much as they could see thus far, but as the distance narrowed between them he turned around.

No sooner had Tim caught a glimpse of his face when he uttered an exclamation of intense surprise.

"Dash me if it ain't ther lubber wot Dixon had imprisoned in ther water cavern!" he exclaimed. "Did yer see his mug, Fritz?"

"Yah! So it vos!" assented the equally astonished Dutch boy.

"Is that so?" asked Jack, in amazement. "Then how came he there?"

"Must a-been aboard o' her all ther time," said Tim.

"Fer sure. I tink so neider," added Fritz.

Upon observing the raft, the man made no effort to stop, but kept the ship going steadily ahead on her course.

After the lapse of another half hour the Kingfisher arrived within a cable's length of the ship, and Jack hailed the man.

"Blue Bird ahoy!" he shouted.

"Well, what do you what?" asked the man, looking around.

"Stop that ship. I wish to come aboard of her."

"What for?"

"I will tell you when I reach your deck."

"Well, I do not want you," was the disagreeable reply.

"That craft belongs to us—you are stealing it."

The man made no reply, but kept coolly sailing on.

"He's a queer Dick!" muttered Tim. "Shall I run up to her?"

"By all means! I'll find out what he is up to."

The raft glided over to the ship's bow, and Jack got hold of the martingales and climbed up the bobstay to the bowsprit.

Upon reaching the deck, he walked aft.

"Leave go that wheel!" he exclaimed.

"Not much. I found this craft, and I'm going to keep her for salvage."

Jack drew his revolver, and aimed it at the man's head.

"Obey me, or I'll drop you!" he exclaimed.

The man instantly weakened.

He let go the wheel, and as the ship ran up into the wind

he held his hands up over his head, and cried in alarmed tones:

"Don't fire! I give in!"

"That is better. Come here till I bind you."

The stranger sullenly obeyed, and Jack secured him.

Leaving the man on deck, the boy let down the two sails with a run, and going down below, he searched the ship.

All the treasure was stowed away in the hold.

Satisfied with this, Jack returned to the deck.

"Say!" exclaimed the stranger.

"Well, what do you want?" asked Jack, pausing beside

"Don't leave me here bound."

"Have you been concealed aboard of this ship?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Oh, I know that you are the man who saw this ship go down, and was incarcerated in the water cavern by David Dixon."

"Ha! how did you know all that?"

Jack explained his whole story from beginning to end, the stranger listening attentively to every word he uttered. When he had finished the man fell to pondering.

"I'll tell you the truth," said he, at length. "When those villains liberated me from the water cavern and I escaped, I was nearly dead from starvation and thirst, but I found enough food to renew my strength. While they had possession of this craft I swam out to her under cover of the darkness, concealed myself down below, and I have been there since, subsisting on the fruit I had in my pockets. Finding the ship abandoned I was making away with her to gain the salvage."

"Will you tell me how you happened to see this ship sink?"

The stranger uttered a laugh full of bitterness.

"I am going to tell you everything," said he. "I may as well. I would sacrifice my life to have revenge upon Dave Dixon for what he did to me. Now I have got the chance!"

"Go ahead!" said Jack, wondering what was coming next.

"I must go back to the time when the Blue Bird was in New York. Dixon came to me and said if I would scuttle the ship he would have her raised, and we could get an enormous amount of salvage to divide between us. I consented. We made a compact. He went away on a yacht. The last I heard of him he was to stop at Seal Island at a certain date. This gave me a plan to work on later on."

"Do you mean to say it was you who scuttled this ship?" asked Jack, in great surprise.

"Wait and you'll see," replied the bound man. "I was one of the Blue Bird's crew. We left New York and went to Wrightstown. I had words with the mate, and he was a hot-tempered man. Afterward the captain and I quarreled. I met the mate and our quarrel was renewed. He ran into the captain's cabin, picked up a knife belonging to Silas Adams, stabbed me with it, and I fell unconscious into the choppers—"

"Good Lord, man!" gasped Jack, excitedly. "What's your name?"

"Bob Bowline!"

"You ~~wasn't~~ murdered, after all?"

"Ain't I a lively-looking corpse?"

"Well, well. Captain Adams is in prison now, charged

with killing you!" cried Jack, "and the guilty mate, who was the most violent in condemning him, has shipped on a whaler."

"We can clear Adams when we return to New York. Let it suffice that I soon regained my senses after being stabbed. I was not badly injured. I bound my wounds up and saw that the ship was deserted. It occurred to me then to get her out to sea and keep my compact with Dixon. Accordingly, I shipped the anchor, and managing to raise the jib-course and reefed spanker, I got under the tarpaulin cover of the wheel so no one would see who was doing the mischief, and cutting a hole in it to see through, I steered the ship out to sea."

"Ah! Now I understand the mystery of her puzzling actions," cried Jack. "You did everything. We pursued you."

"Then you know all about the trip in the storm," said Bob Bowline. "We drew near Seal Island. It was a good place. I bored holes in the ship's planks, and got off in a boat in a fog to the island, and she sank."

"The fog hid your movements from our view."

"No doubt. Anyway, later on Dixon landed there, as I knew he would, and then struck me—stunned me—imprisoned me—left me—came back—and tried to murder me!"

The whole thing was clear to Jack now, and he got the man aboard of the raft, and told his friends the story, amazing them greatly.

A line was then fastened to the ship, and the raft took her in tow.

The run back to Wrightstown was made without accident, and from there they went on to New York.

Here Jack put his prisoners in jail, and turned the Blue Bird and her valuable cargo over to her rightful guardians.

The story of his adventures was recited to the authorities, and when the prisoners were brought to trial, the evidence of Jack and Joe Brandon the man he caught at Wrightstown Bay and Bob Bowline was produced.

Silas Adams was vindicated of the charge of murder.

When the Blue Bird was made fit for sea service again he was put in command of her with a new crew of honest men.

Bowline went to prison for his crime, and David Dixon and his hirelings received long sentences for their rascality.

As Jack's work was then finished, he and his friends took the wrecking raft back to Wrightstown and she was stored away, and the parrot and monkey were returned to the house.

When the matter of salvage for the scuttled ship and her gold was adjusted, Jack received a large sum of money, which he divided equally with Tim and Fritz.

The three friends then returned to their usual way of living.

"The money I received was a large sum," said the young inventor a short time afterwards to his two friends, "but I've just finished the plans of a new submarine wonder, and if you will both lend me your assistance to construct it I'll spend all the money I made in building the contrivance."

There was nothing pleased Tim and Fritz more than that sort of work, and they readily assented to Jack's plan.

And thus engaged upon the construction of a new marvel of Jack's invention we will leave them for awhile.

[THE END.]

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